

# LAPHAM'S

Q U A R T E R L Y

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## FREEDOM

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LAPHAM'S  
QUARTERLY

*Freedom for the pike is death for the minnows.*  
—R.H. Tawney, 1931

*The Prisoner's Dream*, by Moritz von Schwind, 1836.



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# LAPHAM'S

## QUARTERLY

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### FREEDOM

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#### *Voices in Time*

##### FREE PASSAGE

2022: CALIFORNIA	23. CHRISTINE HENNEBERG
1971: PADUA	25. MOVIMENTO DI LOTTA FEMMINILE DI PADOVA
1848: MACON, GA	27. WILLIAM CRAFT
56: ROME	28. TACITUS
1950: MEXICO	30. OCTAVIO PAZ
C. 1600 BC: EBLA	31. SONG OF LIBERATION
C. 1600: LA MANCHA	32. MIGUEL DE CERVANTES
1927: NEW YORK CITY	34. WILL DURANT
1942: OXFORD	36. C.S. LEWIS
1894: ST. LOUIS	37. KATE CHOPIN
C. 525 BC: INDIA	39. SUMANGALAMATA
1649: SURREY	40. GERRARD WINSTANLEY
1981: CAIRO	41. NAWAL EL SAADAWI
1850: PARIS	43. ALEXANDER HERZEN
1917: NEW YORK CITY	46. JOHN DOS PASSOS
C. 1151: RUPERTSBERG	48. HILDEGARD OF BINGEN
1983: NAKURU	50. KOIGI WA WAMWERE
C. 900: BASRA	52. EPISTLES OF THE BRETHREN OF PURITY
1895: CHICAGO	53. EUGENE V. DEBS
1886: LONDON	55. CHARLOTTE WILSON
1995: CASMA	56. AUGUSTO ERNESTO LLOSA GIRALDO

## *Voices in Time*

C. 1695: MONTREAL	58. KANDIARONK
C. 1860: ST. PETERSBURG	59. FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY
1919: WASHINGTON, DC	62. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES JR.
C. 1828: BEIJING	63. WANYAN JINCHI
1952: LYON	64. FRANTZ FANON
73: JUDEA	67. ELEAZAR BEN YA'IR
1969: NEW YORK CITY	68. EDMUND WHITE
1228: LONGXIAN	69. WUMEN HUIKAI
1668: NOTTINGHAMSHIRE	71. MARGARET CAVENDISH
1886: RUSSIA	74. ANTON CHEKHOV
1967: OAKLAND, CA	76. HUEY P. NEWTON
1783: BOSTON	78. BELINDA

### FREE SPIRIT

2022: NEW YORK CITY	81. ANDREY KURKOV
1576: AQUITAINE	82. MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE
1963: ACCRA	85. KWAME NKRUMAH
C. 1884: HARTFORD, CT	87. MARK TWAIN
1991: ENUGU	89. IFEOMA OKOYE

*July 5, 2022, 1:27 PM, Duke's Beach, by Royal Borja Bernberg, 2022.*





## *Voices in Time*

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1842: MARQUESAS ISLANDS | 91. HERMAN MELVILLE                            |
| 1922: MADRAS            | 92. CHAKRAVARTI RAJAGOPALACHARI                |
| 1982: NEW YORK CITY     | 95. ROBIN MORGAN                               |
| C. 420 BC: ATHENS       | 96. THE POLITY OF THE ATHENIANS                |
| 1891: DUBLIN            | 98. OSCAR WILDE                                |
| 1644: LONDON            | 100. JOHN MILTON                               |
| 1913: NEW YORK CITY     | 102. RANDOLPH BOURNE                           |
| C. 1807: GRASMERE       | 104. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH                        |
| 1984: OCEANIA           | 105. GEORGE ORWELL                             |
| C. 680: RABBAN SHAPUR   | 107. ISAAC OF NINEVEH                          |
| 1804: GONAÏVES          | 109. JEAN-JACQUES DESSALINES                   |
| 1938: PARIS             | 111. RAYMOND QUENEAU                           |
| C. 108: NICOPOLIS       | 112. EPICETUS                                  |
| 1877: CAMDEN, NJ        | 114. WALT WHITMAN                              |
| 1975: DURBAN            | 116. NADINE GORDIMER                           |
| 1765: PARIS             | 117. LOUIS DE JAUCOURT                         |
| 2024: UNITED STATES     | 120. TED CHIANG                                |
| 1896: NEW YORK CITY     | 122. VIVEKANANDA                               |
| C. 1119: PRAGUE         | 123. COSMAS OF PRAGUE                          |
| 1785: BLACK FOREST      | 125. MARQUIS DE SADE                           |
| 1938: MEXICO CITY       | 127. ANDRÉ BRETON, DIEGO RIVERA & LEON TROTSKY |



## *Voices in Time*

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1837: EAST BOYLSTON, MA | 129. ANGELINA GRIMKÉ |
| 1929: NEW YORK CITY     | 130. WILLIAM BOLITHO |
| 1420: NARA              | 131. ZEAMI           |
| C. 62: ROME             | 133. SENECA          |
| 1769: DORCHESTER, MA    | 134. JOHN ADAMS      |

### FREE WORLD

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2017: ANN ARBOR, MI       | 137. ELIZABETH ANDERSON          |
| C. 2550 BC: ABU SALABI KH | 138. SHURUPPAK                   |
| 1936: BOMBAY              | 140. B.R. AMBEDKAR               |
| 1649: LONDON              | 141. CHARLES I                   |
| 1980: BULAWAYO            | 143. YVONNE VERA                 |
| 1879: WASHINGTON, DC      | 144. CHIEF JOSEPH                |
| C. 1949: NEW YORK CITY    | 147. LANGSTON HUGHES             |
| 1762: MONTMORENCY         | 148. JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU       |
| C. 312 BC: QI             | 149. MENCIUS                     |
| C. 1350: SONIAN FOREST    | 153. JAN VAN RUYSBROECK          |
| 1960: NEW YORK CITY       | 154. HANNAH ARENDT               |
| 1967: TORONTO             | 155. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.      |
| C. 344 BC: ATHENS         | 157. DEMOSTHENES                 |
| 1874: WASHINGTON, DC      | 159. RICHARD HARVEY CAIN         |
| 1913: HARTFORD, CT        | 161. EMMELINE PANKHURST          |
| C. 1975: SAIGON           | 162. VIET THANH NGUYEN           |
| 1888: SILS MARIA          | 163. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE         |
| C. 830: LUOYANG           | 165. BAI JUYI                    |
| 1980: CALIFORNIA          | 166. ALICE WALKER                |
| 1913: CAMBRIDGE           | 167. ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH        |
| 1651: PARIS               | 170. THOMAS HOBBS                |
| 1907: SWITZERLAND         | 171. ROBERT WALSER               |
| 1774: BOSTON              | 172. PHILLIS WHEATLEY            |
| 1970: SOMALIA             | 174. NURUDDIN FARAH              |
| 1922: LISBON              | 175. FERNANDO PESSOA             |
| C. 1990: SOVIET UNION     | 177. SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH         |
| C. 1615: LIMA             | 179. FELIPE GUÁMAN POMA DE AYALA |
| 1930: WASHINGTON, DC      | 181. CHANNING POLLOCK            |
| 1982: JOHANNESBURG        | 182. DESMOND TUTU                |
| 1789: LONDON              | 183. THOMAS PAINE                |
| 1856: PARIS               | 185. ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE       |
| C. 420 BC: ELEUSIS        | 187. EURIPIDES                   |





Jain Shvetambara Tirthankara in meditation, India, early eleventh century.

## Further Remarks

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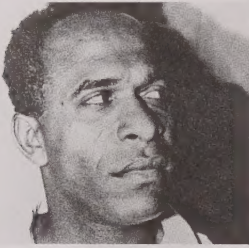
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*Many of the passages in this issue have been abbreviated without the use of ellipses; some punctuation has been modified, and while misspellings have been corrected, archaic grammar and word usage mostly remains unchanged. The words are faithful to the original texts.*

# Among the Contributors



Belarusian writer **Svetlana Alexievich** (1948–) told a German newspaper in 2022 that her convictions had not changed. “I’ve simply understood that life is short and that it’s a shame the road to freedom is so long...I would never have thought that military vehicles would confront us on the streets of my hometown and that I myself would have to live in exile.”



“The national bourgeoisie,” wrote Caribbean revolutionary **Frantz Fanon** (1925–1961) of the gap between urban prosperity and rural poverty, “increasingly turns its back on the interior, on the realities of a country gone to waste, and looks toward the former metropolis and the foreign capitalists who secure its services.”



“We are not orchestrated,” said South African writer **Nadine Gordimer** (1923–2014) of writers in 1991. “Poets sing unaccompanied, and prose writers have no cue on which to come in, each with an individual instrument of expression to make the harmony or dissonance complete.”



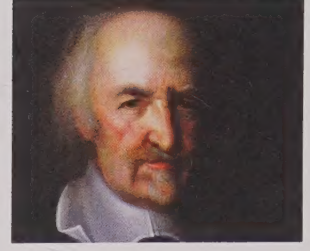
The Stoic philosopher **Epictetus** (c. 55–c. 135) was enslaved by an administrator in the court of Nero. He obtained his freedom after Nero’s death and subsequently walked with a limp that has been attributed either to arthritis or to physical abuse suffered during his time in slavery.



In 1848 Russian writer **Alexander Herzen** (1812–1870) witnessed the aftermath of France’s February Revolution. His disappointment convinced him that the West was too imbued with the values of the past to change the existing social order. “It was vexing to see how our compatriots filed in review before these matadors of rhetoric, who splattered us with words, phrases, and commonplaces,” he wrote.



Even while she was attending St. Louis’ Academy of the Sacred Heart, writer **Kate Chopin** (1851–1904) had a reputation as a free spirit. After she married Oscar Chopin in 1870, she continued her independent ways, smoking cigarettes, dressing as she pleased, and taking long walks alone.



“The liberty of a subject,” wrote philosopher **Thomas Hobbes** (1588–1679), lies “only in those things which, in regulating their actions, the sovereign hath pre-permitted: such as is the liberty to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one another; to choose their own abode, their own diet, their own trade of life, and institute their children as they themselves think fit.”



Le Havre-born author **Raymond Queneau** (1903–1976) served for two years as a Zouave in the French army in Algeria and Morocco. During his time in North Africa, he realized that he did not understand the vernacular of the ordinary French soldier.



At the age of forty-two, the Chinese poet **Bai Juyi** (772–846) was banished from his position as a minor palace official in the capital city of Chang’an. He was sent to fill a minor post on the southern shores of the Yangtze River but was recalled to the capital five years later.





Portuguese writer **Fernando Pessoa** (1888–1935) was born in Lisbon. At the age of seven, he moved to South Africa when his stepfather became Portuguese counsel in Durban. He moved back to Lisbon in 1905 and remained there for the rest of his life. “Travel is for those who cannot feel,” he wrote.



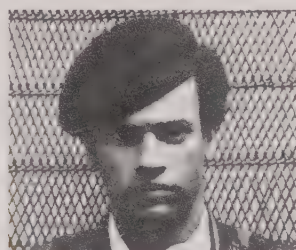
According to historian Eva Doležalová, the Bohemian chronicler **Cosmas of Prague** (1045–1125) preferred “Czechs to other nations on many occasions. We can say he hated Germans and Poles. He often wrote of Poles as rude people, simple people, and Germans, too.”



In 1966, while Ghanaian president **Kwame Nkrumah** (1909–1972) was on his way to Vietnam for a state visit, the Ghanaian army overthrew his Pan-African government with the assistance of the CIA. A statue of Nkrumah outside Parliament House proclaiming him the founder of the nation was smashed into the ground.



In 1893 Indian philosopher **Vivekananda** (1863–1902) went to the future site of the Art Institute of Chicago to represent Hinduism at an international conference on religion. The *New York Herald* reported that “after hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation.”



**Huey P. Newton** (1942–1989), cofounder of the Black Panther Party, was convicted of voluntary manslaughter of an Oakland police officer during a traffic stop. He spent twenty-two months in lockup at the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo and was released following the reversal of his conviction by a California appellate court.



In 1963 writer **Alice Walker** (1944–) transferred from Spelman College in Atlanta to Sarah Lawrence College in New York's Westchester County. “At Sarah Lawrence,” she wrote, “I found all that I was looking for at the time—freedom to come and go, to read leisurely, to go my own way, dress my own way, and conduct my personal life as I saw fit.”



While serving time in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, labor organizer **Eugene V. Debs** (1855–1926) received nearly a million votes as the Socialist candidate for president. “The capitalist system could far better spare its national congress and its state legislatures than its county jails and state prisons,” he wrote in 1912.



In 1907, while serving as secretary of the artists' group Berliner Secession, author **Robert Walser** (1878–1956) wrote a letter to German foreign minister Walther Rathenau requesting that the minister honor his promise to buy a painting because the proceeds from the sale had “already been spent (drunk).”



“For though we design our ways, yet we do not ordinarily think of our pace,” wrote the British philosopher **Margaret Cavendish** (1623–1673), “nor take notice of every several step; just so, most commonly we talk, for we seldom think of our words we speak, nor many times the sense they tend to.”

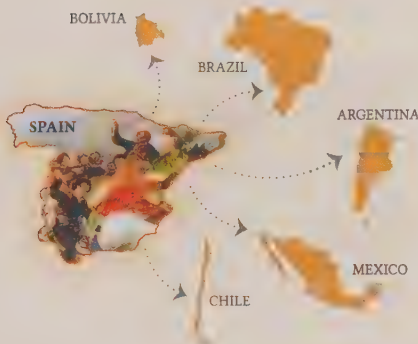
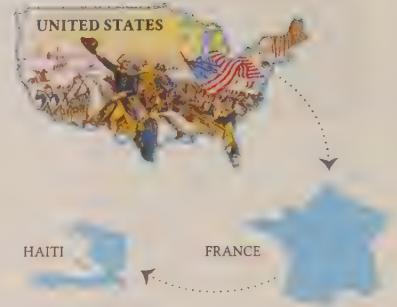
# Free Association

*Democratic transitions, whether successful or not, often occur in multiple places within a relatively short period of time and share common origins.*

## Atlantic Wave 1776–95

**SHOCK:** Influenced by writers like Thomas Paine, revolutionaries on both sides of the Atlantic rallied around Enlightenment ideals about the rights of citizens. In August 1793, standing before a crowd of formerly enslaved guerrilla fighters, Toussaint Louverture proclaimed, “I want liberty and equality to reign...I am working to make that happen.”

**LEGACY:** In 1825 the French returned to Haiti demanding reparations for the loss of the former colony’s slave plantations. The loans the Haitian government took out to make the payments drained an estimated \$115 billion from the fledgling country’s economy.



## Latin American Wars of Independence 1809–24

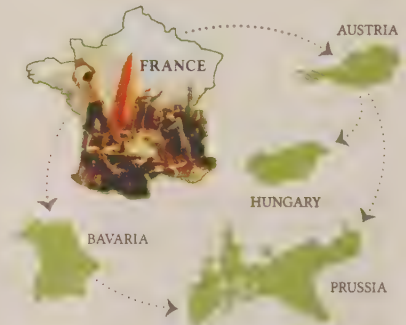
**SHOCK:** Napoleon’s wars in Europe sent shock waves through Latin American colonial politics. The Portuguese royal family abandoned Lisbon for Rio de Janeiro, temporarily easing tension among the Brazilian governing class, while Napoleon’s imprisonment of Ferdinand VII left Spanish colonies with a power vacuum that local elites and colonial administrators vied to fill.

**LEGACY:** In his 1823 message to Congress, U.S. president James Monroe outlined what became known as the Monroe Doctrine, declaring, “The American continents...are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”

## Spring of Nations 1848

**SHOCK:** The 1848 revolutionaries in Europe shared demands for liberalizing reforms, including constitutions, the broadening of suffrage, and the protection of a free press, but most importantly, writes political scientist Kurt Weyland, they all had genuine faith in the power of revolution to improve citizens’ lives.

**LEGACY:** After 1848 at least four thousand revolutionaries, most of them German speakers, emigrated to Great Britain, Brazil, and the United States. Some of these Forty-Eighters later fought for the Union Army during the U.S. Civil War.



## Post-Soviet Wave 1989–93

**SHOCK:** Communist Party general secretary Mikhail Gorbachev’s glasnost (openness) policy resulted in freer speech for individuals and the press, while his perestroika (restructuring) reforms liberalized and decentralized the Soviet Union’s economic and political systems.

**LEGACY:** Public support for the revolutions was fueled by live broadcasts of events like the December 21, 1989, public heckling of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who over the next four days was captured attempting to flee the country, tried by a military tribunal, and executed. “In Europe at the end of the twentieth century,” historian Timothy Garton Ash wrote in 1990, “all revolutions are telerevolutions.”





# Ripple Effect

In a 2018 paper, political scientist Seva Gunitsky classified historical democratic waves into the four categories illustrated below. In Gunitsky's schema, the key dimensions of democratic waves are, first, whether they arise from a vertical "hegemonic shock" (like the fall of the Soviet Union) or from horizontal cross-border linkages (like the revolutions of 1848); and, second, whether external influences take the form of contagion (when outside forces dominate) or emulation (when outside forces provide inspiration but domestic issues determine the course of subsequent events).





La Joconde



# IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

by Curtis White

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**T**his issue of *Lapham's Quarterly* bravely addresses the hotly contested word *freedom*. It is hotly contested in part because what the word means has never been clear, a fact that has not seemed to lessen its importance for us. It is a word in which we have invested enormous amounts of energy without producing much in the way of illumination. And yet freedom cannot be dismissed simply on semantic grounds—"just another word," as Kris Kristofferson sang—because what is at its heart may very well answer the question "What does it mean to be human?"

In our own moment, progressive activists resist what they see as the opposite of freedom: slavery. Modern slavery takes the forms of work and debt, of legislation limiting a woman's authority over her own body, of racist segregation, and of the prison-industrial complex, to name but a few examples. Our world is not so different from the one described by Belinda, a woman enslaved for fifty years in eighteenth-century Massachusetts, where "lawless domination sits enthroned, pouring bloody outrage and cruelty on all who dare to be free" (*Boston*, page 78).

The voice of economic privilege uses the idea of freedom in order to claim the right to deploy property to its own rich advantage. Making matters worse, others on the political right have weaponized freedom to advance a long list of grievances about what they believe has been wrongly taken from them. Some of these grievances are legitimate; neoliberalism has indeed denied many people the work that once gave them economic independence and a sense of self-worth. But that legitimate complaint has gotten tangled with terrible things, especially the

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*This issue was edited by Lewis H. Lapham. To introduce the issue, Lapham recruited Curtis White, a novelist and social critic who has collaborated closely with Lapham since his essay "The Middle Mind" appeared in the March 2002 issue of Harper's Magazine. White's book Transcendent: Art and Dharma in a Time of Collapse was published in January.*

perception of those on the right talking freedom that they have been “replaced” by racial minorities, liberated women, and the LGBTQ community. So they set out to “own the libs” and reclaim their lost freedoms through the public display of their resentments (aka rioting), with guns on their hips if they so choose (and they usually do). This is freedom as understood in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (*Oceania*, page 105): “War is peace. Slavery is freedom. Ignorance is strength.”

What is missing in all of this is the simple insight of the anarchist Charlotte Wilson: “We dream of the positive freedom which is essentially one with social feeling: of free scope for the social impulses now distorted and compressed” (*London*, page 55). For Wilson, freedom is not a thing to be defined. It is something like humanity’s founding metaphysic. As with love or beauty, we don’t know what it is, but we couldn’t get through a day without it. It is like Hegel’s concept of *Geist* (“spirit”), an intuitive confidence in freedom as a guiding and ongoing human project.

Distorted and compressed though we may still be, Wilson’s anarchist impulse remains with us, as Judd Apatow and Michael Bonfiglio’s 2022 documentary *George Carlin’s American Dream* has reminded us. The film made me wonder how

*Freedom suppressed and again regained bites with keener fangs than freedom never endangered.*

—Cicero, 44 BC

it was possible for a being like George Carlin to exist at all, and even to thrive in the popular imagination. How was he possible? The answer is simple enough, because it’s not as if Carlin was self-invented. At every stage of his career, he was an expression not only of the 1960s counterculture but of the countercultural imagi-

nation as an old and honored social force. For the most part, we know this force as art, following André Breton, Diego Rivera, and Leon Trotsky’s insistence that art is “the natural ally of revolution.” In their *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art* (*Mexico City*, page 127), the three write:

To those who urge us, whether for today or for tomorrow, to consent that art should submit to a discipline that we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we give a flat refusal, and we repeat our deliberate intention of standing by the formula: complete freedom for art.

In the peculiar moment that was the sixties counterculture, George Carlin was a distillation of what Monty Python called “something completely different.” And yet he became famous not because he was different, but because he was common. He was “one of us, one of us,” as the sideshow performers chanted in Tod Browning’s 1932 film *Freaks*.

Of course, the sixties counterculture wasn’t self-invented either. It had its American roots in the persona of our founding performance artist, Mark Twain. In his *Autobiography*, Twain (*Hartford, CT*, page 87) fearlessly declares of freedom:

There are certain sweet-smelling, sugarcoated lies current in the world which all politic men have apparently tacitly conspired together to support and perpetuate. One of these is that there is such a thing in the





The Slave Market of Today, by Bernhard Gillam, 1884.

world as independence: independence of thought, independence of opinion, independence of action... We are discreet sheep.

Twain had spectacular contemporaries on the American stage: the celebrated lecture tours of Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde (*Dublin*, page 98), the latter a dandified counterculturist if ever there was one. Wilde's notion of freedom, like Carlin's and Twain's, was simply the right to be intelligent and original in a world determined to be a collective of dunces:

Art is individualism, and individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine.

So that's how Carlin happened. He was part of a lineage. Apatow and Bonfiglio's film reminded me of something that was at one time a countercultural given, settled truth if not law, to wit: "The American dream is bullshit." This meant for Carlin and millions of others that the "pursuit of happiness" in the "land of the free," accomplished through the freedom to pursue "our own good in our own way," as John Stuart Mill put it, was a bad joke that more truly meant, as Nietzsche (*Sils Maria*, page 163) would have said, "You are a herd and you are being led to slaughter."

George Carlin was the dark bard of American unfreedom.

The primary form that American unfreedom takes is, like Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter, hidden in plain sight. It is a thing so common that it disappears into what we take to be the state of nature: money. The prison house of money. As the seventeenth-century Huron chief Kandiaronk (*Montreal*, page 58) attests in this issue:

I affirm that what you call silver is the devil of devils, the tyrant of the French, the source of all evil, the bane of souls, and the slaughterhouse of the living. To pretend you can live in the country of money and at the same time save one's soul is as great a contradiction as for a man to go to the bottom of a lake to preserve his life.

Recently, the bounds of the prison house of money have become vividly clear for college students. Whether they study at a university, a college, or an unaccredited vocational school like Trump University, the young have to contend with three raw facts that together form a penal confine. If you want a good job, you will have to

*The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class—it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity.*

—Anna Julia Cooper, 1892

go to college; if you go to college, you will have to take on debt; and if you want to pay off your debt, you will have to study what money wants you to study (for the most part, business and the STEM disciplines). In case you miss the point here—and almost everyone does—this is naked social coercion. The only thing that might need to be added is the specter of homelessness, so join a

not-so-subtle form of domestic terrorism to the coercion, because the front pages of the daily newspapers make it very clear that there but for fortune go you, with a tent and a sleeping bag, or if you're one of the lucky, a '92 Winnebago Chieftain with transmission issues. So you'd better stay in school—whatever the cost.

Through decades of Reaganism and neoliberal austerity, a determination was made by the elite that the state should no longer pay for social infrastructure like education, health care, and affordable housing. Henceforth, social goods would be privatized and then funded through personal debt. College tuition became a bloated user fee, like paying through the nose for a spot in a private parking lot in Manhattan, while incurring the expense of hospitalization became the shortest route to bankruptcy.

Even so, this monstrous situation will continue to be called “freedom of choice,” however much career counselors and personal finance advisers cringe at the idea. Because it is a lie, but it is not a lie without its own rationality. There is an old saying on the left that goes, “Capitalism knows it will have enemies, but if it must have enemies, it will create them itself and in its own image.” Make no mistake: freedom is its enemy, and capitalism is deeply afraid of it. Money offers its own bullying freedom and dares all comers to contest the claim. But unlike Carlin, mostly we don't dare, because, as Antonio Negri writes, “Money has only one face, that of the boss.”

Karl Marx drew a picture of the prison house of money in *Capital*, volume one: M—C—M'. Capital in front, profit behind, and the infinite potential of human productivity and play shackled in the middle.

As Fernando Pessoa reminds us, our lives are lived inside social fictions: “I tried to see what was the first and most important of those social fictions... The most important, at least in our day and age, is money” (*Lisbon*, page 175). But money is just part of a much larger complex, what Wilde called “the slavery of custom,” in which we have no choice but to live. As the January 6 insurrection and its aftermath have shown, we tell ourselves stories about patriotism—patriotism



with no content other than its own fury. Whether it comes from the rioter in chief, the rioters themselves, or the House members impaneled to investigate them, uncritical love of the nation-state generates unfreedom, violence, and, too often, death, as dear Mother Russia has shown once again, in Ukraine. As John Dos Passos dramatized in *The 42nd Parallel*, patriotism and the rioting that too often attends it are no new thing, as when a “cordon of cops” sweeps up ideological combatants of left and right: “Look out for the Cossacks” (*New York City*, page 46).

Of course, knowing that we live in social fictions and knowing how to escape them are different things. One of the discoveries of the sixties counterculture was that Eastern religions, Buddhism in particular, helped to provide a line of flight. Looked at through a Buddhist lens, what we call social fictions Buddhism calls karma, the causes and conditions into which we are born. In the popular imagination, the Buddhist concept of karma is about personal decisions that create good or bad consequences: the actions of an individual influence the future births of that individual. We say, “Don’t do that, it’s bad karma.” But there is also a karma of the collective. Personal decision-making happens only within a larger karmic context. No one has to go to the trouble of inventing destructive ways of life; they are always already here waiting for every child.

To be born into a racist/sexist/evangelical/gun-crazy/truck-driving community makes it extremely likely that you will be to some degree a racist/sexist/evangelical/gun-crazy/truck-driving human being. This is “instant karma,” as John Lennon sang. Similarly, being born into the moneyed, privileged world inhabited by Lennon’s “beautiful people” is likely to lead the highborn ones to the assumption that their

Ethnomusicologist Roberto Leydi asleep at his desk, Bologna, c. 1980.  
Photograph by Ferdinando Scianna.



abundant lives are just how things should be. After all, they're so pretty, and so much smarter than the rest of us, a claim proved by the size of their bank accounts. Karma is the customs and the habits of mind that we are born into, live through, and then pass on to the next generation. Karma is the bubble we live in, thinking that it is the ocean.

As the sixteenth-century essayist Michel de Montaigne (*Aquitaine*, page 82) wrote, by way of quoting Pliny the Elder, "Custom is the most powerful master of all things." Montaigne expands the characterization:

Little by little and stealthily, she establishes within us the footing of her authority; but having, by this mild and humble beginning, stayed and rooted it with the aid of time, she then displays a fierce and tyrannical countenance, in opposition to which we no longer have liberty even to lift up our eyes. We see her do violence constantly to the laws of nature.

Alexander Herzen makes much the same point in "Omnia Mea Mecum Porto" (*Paris*, page 43):

People allow the external world to overcome them, to captivate them against their will; they renounce their independence, depending on all occasions not on themselves but on the world, pulling ever tighter the knots that bind them to it. They expect from the world all the good and evil in life; the last thing they rely on is themselves. With such childish submission, the fatal power of the external becomes invincible; to enter into battle with it seems madness. Yet this terrible power wanes from the moment when in a man's soul, instead of self-sacrifice and despair, instead of fear and submission, there arises the simple question: "Am I really so fettered to my environment in life and death that I have no possibility of freeing myself from it even when I have in fact lost all touch with it, when I want nothing from it and am indifferent to its bounty?"

Herzen's solution is to remove our fetters through "self-reliance," a remedy not so far from capitalism's appeal to economic individualism and the American obsession with self-determination and "going it alone." Happily, there are other ways of looking at the problem. From a Buddhist perspective, the way out of Herzen's dilemma is to awaken from the world's orthodoxies, stop perpetuating the harm of karma/culture, and then go *beyond* it, into an alternative social reality, the *sangha*, human community defined not by the suspect freedoms of the ego, His Majesty the Sovereign Self, but by "right understanding" and by *metta*, kindness.

In a word, Buddhism offers not just critique but counterculture. Robert Thurman explains in *Essential Tibetan Buddhism* that, almost a millennium before the Chinese invasion of Tibet, Buddhism displaced the warlords and created "a countercultural movement that endured":

The monastic organization was a kind of inversion of the military organization: a peace army rather than a war army, a self-conquest tradition rather than an other-conquest tradition, a science of inner liberation rather than a science of liberating the outer world from the possession of others.



By creating communities against the grain, Buddhism provides a demystified enlightenment. To whatever degree we can withdraw not from the world but from worldly forms and social fictions, to that degree we are enlightened. Marxist critique finds ways to think outside the deadly platitudes that reign over us, but Buddhism offers more: a place to stand not by our self-reliant selves but with others, in community, where we discover the importance of the bodhisattva vow, which might be summarized as “No one is free until we are all free.”

It is clear enough that George Carlin was a critic of American unfreedom, but what's not as clear is that he, too, had made a vow to lead us to our essential freedom. This goes a long way toward explaining why his audience wrote to him not mainly with congratulations for a funny act but with gratitude. The task he set himself was difficult: how to offer freedom by *performing* it, onstage, in the context of that vulgar thing, a stand-up comedy routine. Carlin said some funny things, he said some stupid things, and he said a lot of true things, but in the end it was the totality of the performance, the enactment of freedom, that mattered. Carlin understood that “art is the daughter of freedom,” in Friedrich Schiller's revealing phrase.

*George Carlin's American Dream* is shocking now not because it is saying something new. What is shocking to us is the realization that we have forgotten life-giving things that were once familiar and full of promise. Somewhere along the way, freedom fell into forgetfulness. Again. Carlin was devoted to reminding us of that freedom. He created his sense of it on the stage, and then invited us to join him. Because, as the film's title implies, George Carlin had his own style of American dreaming.

Freedom from harmful social fictions is important for our shared future. But is “raising consciousness,” as we used to call it, our ultimate freedom? Late in his career Carlin seems to have discovered a freedom beyond freedom. Transcendence, perhaps, but transcendence as improvised on open-mic night at the local comedy club. When Carlin was onstage, he enjoyed the freedom of a dancer, but, as Nietzsche thought, “above the dancer is the flyer and his bliss.”

Consider the first five minutes of George Carlin's 1996 interview with Charlie Rose. It still drops the jaw even a quarter century after the fact.

I found a very liberating position for myself as an artist. And that was I sort of gave up on the human race and gave up on the American dream, and culture, and nation, and decided that I didn't care about the outcome. And that gave me a lot of freedom from a kind of distant platform to be sort of amused, kind of to watch the whole thing with a combination of wonder and pity, and try to put that in words...Not having an emotional stake in whether this experiment with human beings works.

Peering with great attention at Charlie Rose, as if he were thinking, “Dig this, Charlie. See if you can chuckle at this,” he continues:

I root for the big comet, I root for the big asteroid to come and make things right...I'm rooting for that big one to come right through that hole in the ozone layer because I want to see it on CNN...Philosophers say, Why are



Deaths of the sun and moon, miniature by Cristoforo de Predis from *Lives of Saints Joachim and Anne and the Nativities of Saint Mary and Our Lord*, 1476.

we here? I know why I'm here. The show. Bring it on... We've all seen a lot of comedians who seem to have a political bent in their work, and always implicit in the work is some positive outcome, that this is all going to work. If only we do this, if only we pass that bill, if only we elect him. It's not true.

And then he says, "It's circling-the-drain time."

And damned if Charlie Rose doesn't chuckle, but what Carlin meant was—as he put it in one of his routines—"Pack your shit, folks, we're going away." That wouldn't seem to be funny at all.

Not everyone was as pleased as Carlin himself seemed with this sobering turn in his career. Stephen Colbert, for one, thought that Carlin had turned nihilistic. As Colbert comments in *American Dream*, "To pursue that level of darkness in the hope that it actually would point toward something hopeful is expecting a lot from your audience, because all you're stating is the dark part."

But for any Buddhist watching the film, there is something oddly familiar about Carlin's new perspective. As Greg Gilman comments in a perceptive essay in *Los Angeles* magazine: "Don't confuse awareness of the inevitable with nihilism... Comedy at its best is funny because it's true. The audience relates to the truth of the punch line. But truth can also hurt." Or as Carlin put it, "One of the problems of Americans is they can't really face reality. And that's why, when it comes crashing down, no one is going to be prepared to handle it." The question that Carlin leaves hanging is "Handle how?"

In Buddhism, the world of individuals who, in Carlin's word, "clot" into self-destructive groups is called samsara, the world of suffering, dissatisfaction, and change. It is a world that can't be fixed. It is simply part of "what is," as Buddhists say, just as the murderous comets whizzing around us are a portion of what is. Comets and clotted people are aspects of the Big Electron, Carlin's term for "everything that is": "It doesn't punish, it doesn't reward, it doesn't judge at all, it just *is*, and so are we, for a little while." All we can do is practice honesty and hope that through it we can find acceptance of what is and...laughter? Because there



is something important in laughter: the possibility of other possibilities. Through laughter Carlin turned audiences into communities. They laughed *together*. They left the theater open to possibility, even if that sense of freedom was gone by the time they got home. Even so, Carlin's audience had been offered a "great notion," in Ken Kesey's words, and not a bloody "great nation."

Strangely, what all this reminds me of is the recent infrared images coming to us from the James Webb Space Telescope. Those images convey a reality fourteen billion years in the making. And while we find the Webb images beautiful and moving, they also show us a fundamental truth about "what is": they show that all things arise, linger, and fall away, including our troubled blue world. The cosmos is on fire, but we have our own little blaze here, the bonfire of the vanities, the flammable passions—greed, anger, and delusion, especially delusion, as neither Carlin nor the Buddha ever tired of showing us.

When we look at the Webb images, we are not seeing Aristotle's *primum movens immobile*, the fixed stars, the unmoved heavens ever available for our gazing. The universe has been expanding and accelerating at 163,000-plus miles per hour for the past fourteen billion years; it is very much on the move. Eventually, this acceleration, red factor flashing, will reach a point where no light will be able to reach us from outside the gravitational confines of our own galaxy. But even this idea is a delusion because in a mere one billion years Earth will be just another star-baked cinder, torched by our expanding sun, and there won't be anyone here to wonder where all the stars have gone.

Is that too dark, Stephen Colbert?

Carlin claimed that imagining the end of the world was entertaining. But perhaps it is better to think that not caring how it turns out is comic hyperbole for the "peace that surpasses all understanding." Carlin's view isn't much different from that of Vivekananda (*New York City*, page 122), who wrote in 1893:

There is only one way to attain that freedom which is the goal of all the noblest aspirations of mankind, and that is by giving up this little life, giving up this little universe, giving up this earth, giving up heaven, giving up the body, giving up the mind, giving up everything that is limited and conditioned.

The teachings of the Buddha and the comedy of George Carlin are founded on a common perception: things are not the way they seem. Our world may seem hard, durable, and permanent, but it is not. That truth can be alarming, especially when delivered by a wit as caustic as Carlin's, but it can also be funny, as funny as the emperor's discovery that his new clothes are his own nakedness, his gaudy social fictions stripped away, leaving only his mortality. At its best, a joke's punch line is secular *kensho*, sudden enlightenment, a moment in which we briefly awaken to how things really are and laugh. What may not be so clear is that this laughter is a summons not only to freedom but to spiritual liberation.

*Irreverence is the champion of liberty and its only sure defense.*

—Mark Twain, 1888





# FREE PASSAGE

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## 2022: California

CHRISTINE HENNEBERG ADVERTISES AGENCY

In the windowless clinic where I work, the back hallway is lined with a row of small square rooms. Inside each room is a desk, a computer screen, a box of tissues, two chairs, and little else. This is where the clinic counselors meet with patients—mostly women, some trans or nonbinary patients, anyone with a uterus—who have come in for their abortions.

In those small rooms, most of the day's work is completed without me. The counselors have a set of questions they're required to go through with each patient, but often the conversation goes off script. A woman starts talking about the things going on in her life: a fight with her partner, her younger kid's asthma, her sister's wedding next week, her mother's alcoholism. All of it is relevant if it feels relevant

to her; the counselor affirms this with an attentive silence, a sympathetic gaze, the occasional *Mmm, ah, I see*. Sooner or later they'll get around to the specific questions critical to today's visit: Is she certain of her decision and ready to proceed today?

Eventually most patients will walk down another hall to one of the procedure rooms, which are larger, with a more clinical ambiance—equipped with an exam table and stirrups, an electric suction device, sterile surgical equipment, an ultrasound machine. These rooms are where I spend most of my day, performing aspirations.

An aspiration is an efficient, relatively gentle approach to emptying the uterus. It involves a small tube, manual or electric suction, and a circular, back-and-forth motion of my

hand and wrist. Today it is how every doctor performs nearly every early abortion; it is also used to manage prolonged or complicated miscarriages. (I cringe when I hear the outdated term *D&C*, which stands for “dilation and curettage” and refers to an old-fashioned, physically harsher version of the procedure involving a sharp-edged surgical scraper.)

Occasionally—perhaps for one or two patients each day—there is a pause, a hiccup in the clinic’s streamlined activity. Before she makes it down the hall for her procedure, I am called into a counseling room to review her case and speak with her.

*The ingrained idea that, because there is no king and they despise titles, the Americans are a free people is pathetically untrue.*

—Margot Asquith, 1922

Like most of my patients, she has come into the clinic for an abortion, or at least to find out if she’s eligible for an abortion. Unlike most of them, perhaps she hasn’t definitely decided what she is going to do. Or she came in because of some symptoms: she is bleeding, possibly miscarrying; she wants to know what I can tell her, what her options are. Or the nurse who performed an ultrasound couldn’t find a pregnancy in the uterus, raising the possibility of an implantation in the fallopian tube or elsewhere.

After we discuss the details of her situation, assuming they don’t present an emergency (uncontrolled bleeding or symptoms that suggest an ectopic pregnancy), I tell her that how we proceed will be largely based on her goals and preferences: Is she certain about terminating the pregnancy, or does she need more time to think about it? If she is already miscarrying, does she prefer the idea of letting her body pass the tissue on its own, or would she like medications or an aspiration procedure to speed up that process? Does she wish to discuss all of this with her partner or a loved one, or would she prefer to decide alone?

She often seems surprised at how much time we spend discussing these personal, non-clinical elements of her decision. When she asks me, “What do you recommend?” I tell her, “There’s no real basis for a medical recommendation in this case. Any of the options I’ve presented are safe and reasonable. It’s a personal decision. It’s really up to you.”

Then I see a look in her eyes, like: *You’re kidding. Up to me?* Sometimes it is a look of fear, at least at first. But inevitably it transforms into something else: a deep, probing, inward gaze that shows me she is, in my presence, accessing a very private place within herself. I have not provided her access to this place—she can get there without me—but I have given her permission to enter it. To withdraw, for a moment, from me and my medical expertise, from the judgments and biases of her friends and family, from the shouts of the protesters in the parking lot. This is one of my favorite parts of my job: watching her go into that place and emerge from it with a decision—or a thoughtful question, or just a word, or yet another expression on her face, one of resolution or sadness or grief or relief. Whatever it is, it comes from within her. It belongs to her.

She came in for an abortion, and what she got instead, or first, was a glimpse of this: her agency; a vision of what her future will look like, even if it’s just the next few days, or the next week, or the next hour; her self.

These are just some of the many things we stand to lose with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Those private conversations in windowless rooms. That secret place inside. Those aspirations.

*“Aspirations,” which The New York Review of Books published in May 2022. In 2021 Henneberg performed an abortion for a colleague who dreamed of having children and later struggled with her decision. “She was in agony, like many of my patients: clear in her decision, certain of it, and still devastated by it,” Henneberg writes in an essay on the “right to regret” that appeared in The Point. But “righteousness and certainty,” she observes, “are not prerequisites for a person to have an abortion... part of what we deserve, and must fight for, is the legitimacy of our negative passions.”*





Children at play, England, c. 1970. Photograph by Tony Boxall.

## 1971: Padua

### WE REFUSE THIS LOGIC

Like all women today, we too find ourselves with a need—urgent for everyone—to organize the fight for *abortion*, given that the level of medical research does not allow us to simply demand *the free mass circulation of contraception*. We are certainly not satisfied with the pill, the injection, or the other chemical and mechanical systems, as we are perfectly aware of all the dangers they still pose. Nor are we satisfied with the development of gynecology, which has been, unsurprisingly, extremely slow compared with other branches of medicine, and which has done little to resolve the dangers associated with contraception. And so we are forced, as an immediate minimum objective, to organize ourselves for abortion, meaning that we organize not for “therapeutic” abortion, which would only reinscribe and aggravate existing class hierarchies, but for *legal* and *free* abortion (with *anesthesia*) accessible to all.

At the same time, we denounce the fact that until now the very illegality of abortion has worked as a major *pillar of an enterprise*

*built on human flesh*—to the extent that it has been a method of delaying or even discouraging the search for contraceptives that do not ruin the biological and psychological health of women. The illegality of abortion has been the basis on which this enterprise has been built and articulated, through the decisions made as to where to concentrate forced abortions and how to organize the division of illegality/legality to the benefit of the novice doctor or the university baron who procures clients for private clinics.

Because we have fully understood all this, our struggle is first of all a struggle against all the social and power structures that have allowed this violence and which want our bodies subject to it. And so let’s say straight from the start that we are changing the sign of this struggle:

*The problem is not abortion.*

*The problem is having the possibility of becoming mothers as often as we want to become mothers. Only when we want to, but whenever we want to.*

The proletarian women of the south now have fifteen children, and middle-class women somehow manage to have only two or three. But it is not the miserable privilege of *not* having children that is our ultimate goal.



*Liberation of Urga*, by O. Cevegjav, mid-twentieth century.

After all, they have already begun to give us these poorly made pills, these injections that do not work, and they will eventually give us something better, and even allow us abortions. The fact is that all this means (and cannot mean anything other than): “Regulate yourself a little. If you earn 100,000 lire, you can have a child; if you earn 150,000, you can even have two.” Our prompt response is that we are not party to this program. We refuse this logic right now, immediately. This accounting, which takes for granted that our earnings or those of a husband should be the basis for planning how many children we have, is badly flawed and must be entirely redone.

Certain literature has begun to circulate inviting mothers—European mothers in particular—to participate in family planning as a matter of “social responsibility.” We reply that the type of “social responsibility” we feel is not at all that of adapting to our wage level but of destroying every wage level, every wage mechanism, so we can have *all* the children we want and only when we want them. We measure our “social responsibility” by our capacity to fight to fully implement and propagate the right of each and every person to place a child on the face of the earth as often as they want.

This is a right that still often has to pass through the conquest of a room for two, because if the precapitalist communities where parents made love in front of their children are now a “paradise lost,” then now, after the original sin separating Adam, Eve, and their children, a room for two is a minimal achievement—in Turin as in Reggio Calabria. Crowded promiscuity is not the utopian community we want to achieve.

*Making love as often as one wants, having children as often as one wants, in comfortable, warm, and beautiful surroundings.*

That means *not paying for motherhood either at the price of wages or at the price of social exclusion.*

*Only by measuring how much we enjoy this right can we measure the social wealth we enjoy.*

**Movimento di Lotta Femminile di Padova**, from “Pregnancy and Abortion.” In June 1971 Mariarosa Dalla Costa, who had been active in the Italian workers’ movement, convened a meeting in Padua to discuss demanding wages for housework. The meeting led to the formation of what came to be called Lotta Femminista, which produced pamphlets, conducted studies, and documented its militant activity. This manifesto was later published in Dalla Costa and Selma James’ book *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*.



## 1848: Macon, GA

### ESCAPE MECHANISM

Knowing that slaveholders have the privilege of taking their slaves to any part of the country they think proper, it occurred to me that, as my wife was nearly white, I might get her to disguise herself as an invalid gentleman and assume to be my master, while I could attend as his slave, and that in this manner we might effect our escape. After I thought of the plan, I suggested it to my wife, but at first she shrank from the idea. She thought it was almost impossible for her to assume that disguise and travel a distance of one thousand miles across the slave states. On the other hand, she also thought of her condition. She saw that the laws under which we lived did not recognize her to be a woman, but a mere chattel to be bought and sold, or otherwise dealt with as her owner might see fit. Therefore, the more she contemplated her helpless condition, the more anxious she was to escape from it. She said, "I think it is almost too much for us to undertake. However, I feel that God is on our side, and with his assistance, notwithstanding all the difficulties, we shall be able to succeed. Therefore, if you will purchase the disguise, I will try to carry out the plan."

But after I concluded to purchase the disguise, I was afraid to go to anyone to ask him to sell me the articles. It is unlawful in Georgia for a white man to trade with slaves without the master's consent. But notwithstanding this, many persons will sell a slave any article that he can get the money to buy. Not that they sympathize with the slave, but merely because his testimony is not admitted in court against a free white person.

Therefore, with little difficulty, I went to different parts of town, at odd times, and purchased things piece by piece—except the trousers, which my wife found necessary to make—and took them home to the house where she resided. Being a ladies' maid, and a favorite slave in the family, she was allowed a little room to herself. Among other pieces of furniture which I had

made in my overtime was a chest of drawers; so when I took the articles home, she locked them up carefully in these drawers.

When we fancied we had everything ready, the time was fixed for the flight. But we knew it would not do to start off without first getting our master's consent to be away for a few days. Had we left without this, they would soon have had us back into slavery, and probably we should never have got another fair opportunity of even attempting to escape.

Some of the best slaveholders will sometimes give their favorite slaves a few days' holiday at Christmastime. After no little amount of perseverance on my wife's part, she obtained a pass from her mistress, allowing her to be away

*A man is either free or he is not. There cannot be any apprenticeship for freedom.*

—Amiri Baraka, 1962

for a few days. The cabinetmaker with whom I worked gave me a similar paper, but said that he needed my services very much, and wished me to return as soon as the time granted was up. I thanked him kindly, but somehow I have not been able to make it convenient to return yet.

When I reached my wife's cottage, she handed me her pass, and I showed mine, but at that time neither of us were able to read them. It is not only unlawful for slaves to be taught to read, but in some states there are heavy penalties attached, such as fines and imprisonment, which will be vigorously enforced upon anyone who is humane enough to violate the so-called law.

At first we were highly delighted at the idea of having gained permission to be absent for a few days. But our spirits drooped within us when the thought flashed across my wife's mind that it was customary for travelers to register their names in the visitors' book at hotels, as well as in the clearance or customhouse book at Charleston, South Carolina.

So, while we sat in our little room upon the verge of despair, all at once my wife raised her head, and with a smile upon her face, which

was a moment before bathed in tears, said, “I think I have it!” I asked what it was. She said, “I think I can make a poultice and bind up my right hand in a sling, and with propriety ask the officers to register my name for me.” I thought that would do.

It then occurred to her that the smoothness of her face might betray her; so she decided to make another poultice, and put it in a white handkerchief to be worn under the chin, up the cheeks, and to tie over the head. This nearly hid the expression of her countenance, as well as her beardless chin.

My wife, knowing that she would be thrown a good deal into the company of gentlemen,

fancied that she could get on better if she had something to go over the eyes. So I went to a shop and bought a pair of green spectacles. This was in the evening.

We sat up all night discussing the plan and making preparations. Just before the time arrived for us to leave in the morning, I cut off my wife’s hair at the back of the head, and got her to dress in the disguise and stand out on the floor. I found that she made a most respectable-looking gentleman.

My wife had no ambition whatever to assume this disguise, and would not have done so had it been possible to have obtained our liberty by simpler means. But we knew it was

## 56: Rome

### FREE REIGN

When the Senate discussed the offenses of former slaves, it was demanded that patrons should be empowered to reenslave undeserving ex-slaves. The proposal had widespread support. But the consuls did not dare to put the motion without consulting the emperor, to whom they wrote outlining the Senate’s view. Since his advisers were divided, Nero hesitated to give a ruling. One side denounced the disrespectfulness of liberated slaves. “It goes to such lengths,” they said, “that former slaves confront their patron with the choice of yielding them their rights by legal argument, as equals, or by force. Freed slaves even lift their hands to strike their former masters—and sarcastically urge their own punishment. All that an injured patron may do is send his freed slave away beyond the hundredth milestone—to the Campanian beaches. In all other respects the two men are legally equal and identical. Patrons ought to be given a weapon that cannot be disregarded. It would be no hardship for the liberated to have to keep their freedom by the same respectful behavior that won it for them. Indeed, blatant offenders ought to be enslaved again, so as to frighten the ungrateful into obedience.”

The opposite argument went thus: “The guilty few ought to suffer, but not to the detriment of freed slaves’ rights in general. Ex-slaves are everywhere. They provide the majority of the voters, public servants, attendants, watch-

men, firemen. Most knights and many senators are descended from former slaves. Segregate the freed and you will only show how few freeborn there are! When our ancestors fixed degrees of rank, they were right to make everyone free. Besides, two sorts of liberation were instituted to leave room for second thoughts. Some were liberated ‘by the wand’; those who were not remained half slaves. Slave-owners ought to consider individual merits but be slow to grant what is irrevocable.”

This opinion prevailed. Nero wrote asking the Senate to give separate consideration to every charge by a patron but not to diminish the rights of ex-slaves in general. Soon afterward, his aunt Domitia was deprived of the patronage of her former slave Paris, ostensibly on legal grounds. He was pronounced freeborn on the orders of the emperor—whose reputation suffered thereby.

**Tacitus**, from his *Annals*. *An estimated one-fifth of the Roman Empire’s population—perhaps ten million people during the first century—were enslaved. Emancipated slaves often still owed duties to their former masters after manumission. Paris, a pantomime and the slave of Nero’s aunt, aided his mistress in a plot to murder Agrippina. When the plot failed, Nero, a lover of theater, kept Paris from facing the same punishment as his accomplices by declaring him a free Roman. Nero later tried to get Paris to teach him to dance; when Nero failed to catch on, he put Paris to death in 67.*





Samson Captured by the Philistines (detail), by Guercino, 1619.

not customary in the South for ladies to travel with male servants, and therefore it would have been a very difficult task for her to have come off as a free white lady, with me as her slave. In fact, her not being able to write would have made this quite impossible. We knew that no public conveyance would take us or any other slave as a passenger without our master's consent. This consent could never be obtained to pass into a free state. My wife's being muffled in the poultices, etc., furnished a plausible excuse for avoiding general conversation, of which most Yankee travelers are passionately fond.

When the time had arrived for us to start, we blew out the lights, knelt down, and prayed to our Heavenly Father mercifully to assist us, as he did his people of old, to escape from cruel bondage. After this we rose and stood for a few moments in breathless silence. We were afraid

that someone might have been about the cottage listening and watching our movements. I took my wife by the hand, stepped softly to the door, raised the latch, drew it open, and peeped out. Though there were trees all around the house, the foliage scarcely moved. In fact, everything appeared to be as still as death. I then whispered to my wife, "Come, my dear, let us make a desperate leap for liberty!"

**William Craft**, from *Running a 'Thousand Miles for Freedom*. William and Ellen Craft were born into slavery in Georgia. William was apprenticed to a carpenter in Macon, while Ellen, the child of an enslaved woman and a white slaveholder, was sent at the age of eleven to serve as a maid for her half sister. About two years after the Crafts married, they began their escape, with Ellen disguised as an invalid white man; as they approached Charleston by ship, a fellow passenger scolded Ellen for her courtesy toward her "slave," William. The couple arrived in Philadelphia on Christmas Day in 1848.



## 1950: Mexico

### FORMLESS LIBERTY

The fiesta is a revolution in the most literal sense of the word. In the confusion that it generates, society is dissolved, is drowned, insofar as it is an organism ruled according to certain laws and principles. But it drowns in itself, in its own original chaos or liberty. Everything is united: good and evil, day and night, the sacred and the profane. Everything merges, loses shape and individuality, and returns to the primordial mass. The fiesta is a cosmic experiment, an experiment in disorder, reuniting contradictory elements and principles in order to bring about a renaissance of life. Ritual death

*Aren't people absurd! They never use the freedoms they do have but demand those they don't have; they have freedom of thought, they demand freedom of speech.*

—Søren Kierkegaard, 1843

promotes a rebirth; vomiting increases the appetite; the orgy, sterile in itself, renews the fertility of the mother or of the earth. The fiesta is a return to a remote and undifferentiated state, prenatal or presocial. It is a return that is also a beginning, in accordance with the dialectic that is inherent in social processes.

The group emerges purified and strengthened from this plunge into chaos. It has immersed itself in its own origins, in the womb from which it came. To express it in another way, the fiesta denies society as an organic system of differentiated forms and principles, but affirms it as a source of creative energy. It is a true re-creation, the opposite of the “recreation” characterizing modern vacations, which do not entail any rites or ceremonies whatever and are as individualistic and sterile as the world that invented them.

Society communes with itself during the fiesta. Its members return to original chaos and freedom. Social structures break down and

new relationships, unexpected rules, capricious hierarchies are created. In the general disorder everybody forgets himself and enters into otherwise forbidden situations and places. The bounds between audience and actors, officials and servants, are erased. Everybody takes part in the fiesta, everybody is caught up in its whirlwind. Whatever its mood, its character, its meaning, the fiesta is participation, and this trait distinguishes it from all other ceremonies and social phenomena. Lay or religious, orgy or saturnalia, the fiesta is a social act based on the full participation of all its celebrants.

Thanks to the fiesta, the Mexican opens out, participates, communes with his fellows and with the values that give meaning to his religious or political existence. And it is significant that a country as sorrowful as ours should have so many and such joyous fiestas. Their frequency, their brilliance and excitement, the enthusiasm with which we take part, all suggest that without them we would explode. They free us, if only momentarily, from the thwarted impulses, the inflammable desires that we carry within us. But the Mexican fiesta is not merely a return to an original state of formless and normless liberty: the Mexican is not seeking to return, but to escape from himself, to exceed himself. Our fiestas are explosions. Life and death, joy and sorrow, music and mere noise are united, not to re-create or recognize themselves, but to swallow each other up. There is nothing so joyous as a Mexican fiesta, but there is also nothing so sorrowful. Fiesta night is also a night of mourning.

**Octavio Paz**, from *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. In 1914, the year Paz was born, his father, a lawyer, joined Emiliano Zapata's peasant army as Zapata's assistant. After Zapata was assassinated in 1919, the Paz family moved to California; upon their later return to Mexico, Paz's father founded the National Agrarian Reform Party and wrote a biography of Zapata. Paz was committed to revolution as “the great Goddess, the eternal Beloved,” but became disillusioned by conditions in Cuba and the Soviet Union, where, he said, “the revolution was confiscated” by elites interested only in “a military-bureaucratic dictatorship.”



Students entering the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland, 1978. Photograph by Nathan Benn.

## C. 1600 BC: Ebla

### HOBSON'S CHOICE

If you decree a release of the people of Igingallis, the fate for Ebla is this:  
You decree release, and I shall exalt your weapons to have godlike force;  
your weapons will defeat any foe, and your fields will thrive gloriously.

If you do not decree a release, the fate for Ebla is this:  
On the seventh day I shall come to you,  
and I shall destroy the city of Ebla.

I shall smash the city like a cup,  
I shall trample the acropolis in the dump,  
I shall crush the marketplace within it like a cup underfoot.

*From the Hurrian "Song of Liberation." One of the earliest kingdoms in Syria, Ebla flourished in the third millennium BC. This song tells the story of the people of Igingallis, a neighboring city, being held captive in Ebla. The Hurrian storm gods threatened to annihilate Ebla if the captives were not released; the city elders refused, and Ebla was destroyed around 1600 BC. Fragments of the tablets on which this epic poem was recorded in Hurrian and Hittite were discovered in 1983 during an excavation of Hattusa; some historians have posited that the song was written after the destruction of Ebla in order to explain the fall of the city.*

## C. 1600: La Mancha

### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Don Quixote raised his eyes and saw that some twelve men on foot, strung by the neck, like beads on a great iron chain, and with shackles on their hands, were plodding toward them along the road. Two men on horseback and two others on foot were escorting them. As soon as Sancho Panza saw them he said:

"Here comes a chain gang of convicts, on their forced march to the king's galleys."

"What do you mean, forced march?" demanded Don Quixote. "Is it possible that the king uses force on anyone?"

*None who have always been free can understand the terrible fascinating power of the hope of freedom to those who are not free.*

—Pearl S. Buck, 1943

"I don't mean that," replied Sancho, "just that they've been sentenced to serve the king in his galleys for their crimes, and they've got a long walk to get there."

"In short," replied Don Quixote, "whatever the details may be, these people, wherever they are going, are being forced to march there, and are not doing it of their own free will."

"That's right," said Sancho.

"In that case," said his master, "this situation is calling out for the exercise of my profession: the redressing of outrages and the succor and relief of the wretched."

"Look, sir," said Sancho. "Justice—and that means the king himself—isn't doing these people any outrages, only punishing them for their crimes."

At this point the chain gang came up, and Don Quixote, in courteous language, asked the guards to be so kind as to inform him of the reason or reasons why they were bearing those people off in that way. One of the guards on horseback replied that they were all convicts, detained at His Majesty's pleasure and on their

way to the galleys, and that there was nothing else to be said and nothing else that he had any business to know.

"All the same," said Don Quixote, "I should like to hear from each one of them individually the cause of his misfortune."

Don Quixote approached the chain gang and asked the first convict what sins had put him in that plight. The convict replied that he was there for being in love.

"For no more than that?" replied Don Quixote. "If they send men to the galleys for being in love, I could have been rowing in them for a long time by now."

"It isn't love of the sort you think," said the convict. "Mine was for a washing basket that was chockablock with linen, and I loved it so much, and I hugged it so tight, that if the law hadn't taken it off me by force, I still wouldn't have let go of it of my own free will to this day."

Don Quixote put the same question to the second convict, who was so overcome by melancholy that he didn't offer a word in reply, but the first one answered for him and said:

"This one, sir, is here for being a canary, that is to say for being a singer and musician."

"What?" said Don Quixote. "Do men go to the galleys for being singers and musicians, too?"

"Yes, sir," replied the convict, "because there's nothing worse than singing in your throes."

"On the contrary," said Don Quixote, "I have often heard it said that one can sing away sorrows and cast away care."

"Here it's the opposite," said the convict. "Sing just that once, and you'll weep for the rest of your life."

"I fail to understand," said Don Quixote.

But one of the guards explained:

"Sir knight, among these ungodly people singing in your throes means confessing under torture. This sinner was tortured, and he confessed to his crime—he's a prigger of prancers, in other words a horse thief. He's always sad and lost in his thoughts because the other criminals despise and mock and maltreat him and make his life impossible for confessing and not having the guts to keep saying no. They say, you see, that



## Free for All

*How the world's top economies fare across three measurements of freedom*

### Top economies by GDP (World Bank, 2021)

 1. United States	 2. China	 3. Japan	 4. Germany	 5. United Kingdom
 6. India	 7. France	 8. Italy	 9. Canada	 10. South Korea

### Rankings across three freedom metrics

Freedom Score <i>Out of 210 countries and territories</i>	Press Freedom <i>Out of 180 countries</i>	Incarceration Rate <i>Out of 223 countries and territories</i>
 5. Canada	 16. Germany	 1. United States
 13. Japan	 19. Canada	 115. United Kingdom
 20. Germany	 24. United Kingdom	 124. China
 30. United Kingdom	 26. France	 140. France (tie)
 39. France	 42. United States	 140. South Korea (tie)
 40. Italy	 43. South Korea	 143. Canada
 60. South Korea	 58. Italy	 154. Italy
 61. United States	 71. Japan	 174. Germany
 87. India	 150. India	 208. Japan
 184. China	 175. China	 209. India

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2022*

*Methodology:* Investigators rate each country on a series of twenty-five indicators derived from the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A country's total score reflects its population's overall level of access to political rights and civil liberties.

Source: Reporters Without Borders, *World Press Freedom Index 2022*

*Methodology:* Countries are scored on the basis of two metrics: a tally of targeted abuses against journalists and media outlets and a questionnaire completed for each country by panels of press-freedom specialists.

Source: World Prison Brief, *Prison Population List, 2021*

*Methodology:* Incarceration rates represent the number of prisoners for every 100,000 people, according to reports from each country's government. Some countries, such as China, may have additional unreported incarcerated populations.

*may* has no more letters in it than *aye*, and that a delinquent's a lucky man if his life or death depends on his own tongue and not on witnesses or evidence, and it's my belief they aren't far wrong."

"That is my understanding, too," replied Don Quixote.

He moved on to the third convict and put the same question to him. The reply was ready and assured:

"I'm off for the lack of ten ducats."

"I will most gladly give you twenty," said Don Quixote.

"That looks to me," replied the convict, "like having money in the middle of the ocean

when you're starving and there isn't anywhere to buy what you need. I'm saying this because if I'd had those twenty ducats you're offering me when I needed them, I'd have used them to grease the clerk's pen and liven up my lawyer's wits, and now I'd be in the middle of Zocodover Square in Toledo instead of in the middle of this road, like a greyhound on a leash."

Don Quixote went on to the fourth convict, a man with a venerable face and a white beard reaching below his chest who, when asked why he was there, began to weep and didn't reply, but the fifth convict acted as interpreter and said:

## 1927: New York City

### ANARCHISTS AND PRUSSIANS

It is the same soul that hungers for the license of liberty and the security of order; the same mind that hovers, in its fluctuating strength and fear, between pride in its freedom and admiration for the police. There are moments when we are anarchists, and moments when we are Prussians. In America above all—in this land of the brave and this home of the free—we are a little fearful of liberty. Our forefathers were free in politics, and stoically stern in morals; they respected the Decalogue, and defied the state. But we deify the state, and riddle the Decalogue; we are Epicureans in morals, but we submit to all but one of a hundred thousand laws; we are slaves in politics, and free only in our cups.

It is not law that takes our freedom from us; it is the innocuous desuetude of our minds. Standardized education, and the increasing power of mass suggestion in an increasing mass, rob us of personality and character and independent thought; as crowds grow, individuals disappear. Ease of communication facilitates imitation and assimilation; visibly we joy in becoming as much as possible alike—in our dress, our manners, and our morals, in the interior decoration of our homes, our hotels, and our minds. God knows—perhaps even our moral freedom is a form of imitation.

Yet some rebellion is better than none; and possibly our thirst for liberty will go to the head, and dare to include thought. It is good that men should resist wholesale moralization by the law; to forbid the use of stimulating and consoling liquors because some men abuse them shows the amateurish weakness of a government that does not know how to control the fools without making fools of all. Civilization without wine is impossible. Civilization without restraint is impossible; and there can be no restraint where there is no liberty.

**Will Durant**, from *"In Praise of Freedom."* Durant married *Ida Kaufman*, one of his students at the Ferrer Modern School in New York City, in 1913; Durant called her *Ariel*, and she later adopted that name legally. In 1927 they began writing the eleven-volume *Story of Civilization*; *Ariel* was not formally credited as Durant's collaborator until 1961. Rousseau and Revolution, the tenth volume, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1968. "We have selected for our rulers," Durant writes elsewhere in this essay, "gentlemen who reverently represent the established gods."

"This honorable man is going to the galleys for four years, having been paraded in state through the customary streets, all dressed up and on a fine horse."

"That means, I think," said Sancho, "that he was exposed to public shame."

"That's right," said the convict, "and the crime he was given this punishment for was stockbroking, or to be more exact, bodybroking. What I mean to say is that this gentleman's here for being a pimp, and also for having a touch of the sorcerer about him."

"If it were not for the touch of the sorcerer," said Don Quixote, "for being a pimp alone he does not deserve to go to row in the galleys, but rather to be the admiral in charge of them. Because the pimp's trade is no ordinary trade; it must be carried out by intelligent people, and it is absolutely essential to any well-ordered society, and only the wellborn should exercise it. There should be an official inspector of pimps, as there is of other trades, and a maximum permitted number of them established and published, as is the case with stockbrokers, and this would be the way to forestall many evils that arise from the fact that this trade is in the hands of untrained and unqualified people. I should like to go on to give the reasons why it would be advisable to make a careful selection of those who do such a necessary job in society, but this is not the place. One day I shall present my ideas to the proper authorities."

"Right you are," said the old man, "and honestly, sir, I wasn't guilty of being a sorcerer, though I couldn't deny the charge of being a pimp. All I wanted was for everyone to be happy and live in peace and quiet, without any quarrels or sadness."

And here he started weeping again. Don Quixote moved on to the next man and asked what was his crime, and he replied with no less brio than the last, indeed with rather more of it:

"I'm here because I fooled around too much with two girl cousins of mine, and with two girl cousins of somebody else's. In short, I fooled around so much with the lot of them that as a result the family tree's become so



Leaflet the U.S. Department of Defense air-dropped during Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan, c. 2002.

complicated that I don't know who the devil would be able to work it out. I was sentenced to the galleys for six years, and I accepted my fate: it's the punishment for my crime. I'm still young, long live life, while there's life there's hope."

Turning to the chain gang, Don Quixote said:

"From everything that you have told me, dearly beloved brethren, I have gathered that although it is for your crimes that you have been sentenced, the punishments you are to suffer give you little pleasure, and that you are on your way to receive them with reluctance and against your will. And it could be that one man's lack of courage under torture, another's lack of money, another's lack of strings to pull, and, to be brief, the judge's perverse decisions, were the causes of your downfall and of his failure to recognize the right that was on your side. All of which is now so powerfully present in my mind that it is persuading, telling, and even obliging me to demonstrate on you the purpose for which heaven sent me into this world and made me profess in it the order of chivalry that I do profess, and the vow that I made to favor the needy and those oppressed by the powerful. But because I know that one essential part of prudence is never to do by force what can be achieved by consent, I hereby

request these guards and this sergeant to be so kind as to release you and allow you to go in peace, for there will be no lack of other men to serve the king in happier circumstances, and it does seem excessively harsh to make slaves of those whom God and nature made free. What is more, guards," added Don Quixote, "these poor men have done nothing to you. Let each answer for his sins in the other world; there is a God in heaven who does not neglect to punish the wicked and reward the virtuous, and it is not right for honorable men to be the executioners of others, if they have no personal concern in the matter. I am making my request in this mild and measured manner so that if you accede to it, I shall have reason for thanking you, but if you do not accede voluntarily, this lance and this sword and the might of my arm will force you to comply."

**Miguel de Cervantes**, from *Don Quixote*. In 1569 a royal warrant was issued for Cervantes' arrest after he wounded a mason in a court duel. To avoid his punishment, the severing of his right hand, the twenty-two-year-old Cervantes fled to Rome, where he entered the service of a cardinal before enlisting in the army of the Holy League to fight the expanding Ottoman Empire. His ship was captured by pirates in 1575, and he was enslaved in Algiers for five years. Cervantes alludes to this experience in the "Captive's Tale" in *Don Quixote*, which he began writing while serving a prison sentence in Seville for embezzlement.



## 1942: Oxford

### WILL CALL

Christians believe that an evil power has made himself for the present the prince of this world. And, of course, that raises problems. Is this state of affairs in accordance with God's will or not? If it is, he is a strange God, you will say. And if it is not, how can anything happen contrary to the will of a being with absolute power?

But anyone who has been in authority knows how a thing can be in accordance with your will in one way and not in another. It may be quite sensible for a mother to say to the children, "I'm not going to go and make you tidy the

*That sweet bondage which is freedom's self.*

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1813

schoolroom every night. You've got to learn to keep it tidy on your own." Then she goes up one night and finds the teddy bear and the ink and the French grammar all lying in the grate. That is against her will. She would prefer the children to be tidy. But on the other hand, it is her will which has left the children free to be untidy. The same thing arises in any regiment, or trade union, or school. You make a thing voluntary and then half the people do not do it. That is not what you willed, but your will has made it possible.

It is probably the same in the universe. God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which is free but has no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good, it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automatons—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for his higher creatures is the hap-

piness of being freely, voluntarily united to him and to one another in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free.

Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way; apparently he thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with him. But there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes; you could not be right and he wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source. When you argue against him you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all: it is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will—that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when he pulls the strings—then we may take it that it is worth paying.

When we have understood about free will, we shall see how silly it is to ask, as somebody once asked me, "Why did God make a creature of such rotten stuff that it went wrong?" The better stuff a creature is made of—the cleverer and stronger and freer it is—then the better it will be if it goes right, but also the worse it will be if it goes wrong. A cow cannot be very good or very bad; a dog can be both better or worse; a child better and worse still; an ordinary man, still more so; a man of genius, still more so; a superhuman spirit best—or worst—of all.

**C.S. Lewis**, from *Mere Christianity*. Lewis was born to a Protestant family in Belfast that provided him with "endless books." After his mother died of cancer in 1908, Lewis questioned and eventually renounced Christianity. After serving in World War I, he returned to the University of Oxford, where he had earned his undergraduate degree, joining the faculties of English and philosophy at Magdalen College and University College and befriending the Christian scholars Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien. By 1931 he had resumed practicing Christianity, and in 1958 he admitted that most of what he wrote was "evangelistic."

## 1894: St. Louis

### FALSE POSITIVE

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

*Ptolemy Granting Freedom to the Jewish Slaves of Alexandria (detail), by Noël Coypel, c. 1672.*





Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself, a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “Free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

*In every human breast, God has implanted a principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of oppression and pants for deliverance.*

—Phillis Wheatley, 1774

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his gripsack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

**Kate Chopin**, “*The Story of an Hour*.” Chopin came from a family of single women; her great-grandmother obtained the first legal separation granted in the St. Louis region, and both her grandmother and mother were widowed young. After Chopin was herself widowed in Louisiana at the age of thirty-two, she brought her six children back to St. Louis. She began writing to support her family, keeping a ledger recording the details of hundreds of stories she submitted to magazines. “*The Story of an Hour*” was rejected four times before *Vogue* published it in December 1894.



## c. 525 BC: India

### A WOMAN FREE!

At last free,  
at last I am a woman free!  
No more tied to the kitchen,  
stained amid the stained pots,  
no more bound to the husband  
who thought me less  
than the shade he wove with his hands.  
No more anger, no more hunger,  
I sit now in the shade of my own tree.  
Meditating thus, I am happy, I am serene.

**Sumangalamata**, a poem from the Therigatha. This verse appears in a collection of poems attributed to the theris, or senior nuns, who were among the first female followers of the Buddha. The collection was transcribed in the first century BC by Pali monks. According to a later commentary on the text, Sumangalamata spoke this verse aloud while recalling the domestic tasks she escaped through ordination. It is believed that the Buddha permitted the ordination of women after his stepmother and five hundred other women cut their hair, donned religious robes, and began following him on foot.

After the Game, by Fausto Zonaro, c. 1900.



## 1649: Surrey

### COMMON GROUND

In the beginning of time, the great creator Reason made the earth to be a common treasury to preserve beasts, birds, fishes, and man, the lord that was to govern this creation. Man had domination given to him over the beasts, birds, and fishes, but not one word was spoken in the beginning that one branch of mankind should rule over another.

But since human flesh began to delight in the objects of creation more than in reason and righteousness, he fell into blindness of mind, and ran abroad for a teacher and ruler.

*I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free. The freedom of other men, far from negating or limiting my freedom, is, on the contrary, its necessary premise and confirmation.*

—Mikhail Bakunin, 1871

The earth was hedged into enclosures by the teachers and rulers, and the others were made servants and slaves. And that earth that was made a common storehouse for all is bought and sold and kept in the hands of a few.

O thou powers of England, though thou hast promised to make this people a free people, yet thou hast so handled the matter that thou hast wrapped us up more in bondage, and oppression lies heavier upon us.

The people stand to maintain a universal liberty and freedom, which not only is our birthright, which our Maker gave us, but which thou hast promised to restore unto us from under the former oppressing powers that are gone before, and which likewise we have bought with our money, in taxes, free quarter, and bloodshed—all which sums thou hast received at our hands, and yet thou hast not given us our bargain.

If some of you will not dare to shed your blood to maintain tyranny and oppression upon

creation, know that our blood and life shall not be unwilling to be delivered up in meekness to maintain universal liberty.

So long as we, or any other, doth own the earth to be the peculiar interest of lords and landlords, and not common to others as well as them, we hold creation under bondage. Those that buy and sell land, and are landlords, have got it either by oppression, or murder, or theft; all landlords live in breach of the seventh and eighth commandments: Thou shalt not steal, nor kill.

England is not a free people till the poor that have no land have a free allowance to dig and labor the commons, and so live as comfortably as the landlords that live in their enclosures.

If you look through the earth, you shall see that the landlords, teachers, and rulers are oppressors, murderers, and thieves in this manner, but it was not thus from the beginning. And this is one reason for our digging and laboring the earth one with another. For so long as we own landlords in this corrupt settlement, we cannot work in righteousness.

All laborers, or such as are called poor people, shall not dare to work for hire, for any landlord, or for any that is lifted up above others. By their labors, they have lifted up tyrants and tyranny, and by denying to labor for hire, they shall pull them down again. He that works for another, either for wages, or to pay him rent, works unrighteously, but they that are resolved to work and eat together, making the earth a common treasury, doth join hands with Christ to lift up creation from bondage.

**Gerrard Winstanley**, from *The True Levelers' Standard Advanced*. *Four days before King Charles I was beheaded, Winstanley published The New Law of Righteousness, which argued for communal living and against the individual pursuit of power. He joined a group cultivating land in Surrey as a protest against enclosures; known as the Diggers, they sought to share the earth as a "common treasury." The Diggers, one scholar has pointed out, based their philosophy on a "proscribed reading of a biblical text," a verse from Acts: "Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common."*



*Allegory of Freedom, United States, c. 1863.*

## 1981: Cairo

### TREE OF LIFE

During the first few days in prison, my anticipation of the future did not extend beyond the walls of the cell—and the toilet. Going out into the small dirt enclosure broadened my hopes to include the surrounding walls. I would gaze from between the steel bars on the door to the large prison courtyard and I'd sense my hopes creeping out into that wide space, all the way over to that large tree with its spreading branches and soft green leaves. Maybe tomorrow my fingers would touch them.

When I thought of the future, my mind did not extend beyond the walls of the enclosure or those of the courtyard. Every time I opened my eyes to a new day and saw some part of our hopes for the future come to fruition, in the toi-

let or cell, a sense of optimism and happiness would come over me. When the shower was put in and the abundant drizzles of water fell on my body for the first time since I'd entered prison, I began to sing an old tune I'd loved since I was a child. As I washed my hair, the scent of the soap and the taste of the water had a sweetness of which I had not been conscious since my childhood, and the feel of the water on my body was as strongly pleasurable as if I had not had a bath since I was a child. My voice, too, took on a sweetness of tone that resounded in my ears as if I had not sung since I was little.

I heard the voice from outside the toilet's half-open broken door, and I saw the two small openings in the black niqab. One hand inside a black glove went up rapidly to cover the two eyeholes while the other plugged an ear, and I heard her say, "May God Almighty forgive our sins. Singing is taboo."



My eyes widened in astonishment. Even my maternal grandmother used to sing, although she was born to a Turkish mother and lived in my grandfather's house in the age when harems still existed. I never saw her hair uncovered, nor did I see her leave the house until she was borne away inside a coffin. Yet I used to listen to her singing as she sat in her spacious sitting room on soft cushions, her wool-stockinged feet stretched out on the intricately woven Persian carpet and her head wrapped in a white veil which quivered as she sang. My grandfather—stern military man, zealous son of a religious sheikh—would pass by as she sat and listen to her sing without ever once saying to her that singing was taboo.

*Freedom is not a luxury that we can indulge in when at last we have security and prosperity and enlightenment; it is, rather, an antecedent to all of these, for without it we can have neither security nor prosperity nor enlightenment.*

—Henry Steele Commager, 1954

Through the drizzle of water, the shape standing behind the shutter of the broken door, her head and body wrapped in black, one black hand on her ear and the other over her eyes, appeared to me like a stone statue from earlier times, those of feudalism and slavery.

A dream would tease me as I stood behind the steel door peering between the bars at the prisoners walking in the vast courtyard. I dreamed that I would open my eyes and find that I was one of them, that I too was strolling through that extended courtyard as far as the huge, thick-branched tree with its green leaves flashing and trembling, perceivable even from a distance.

Hearing my wish, the *shawisha* rapped her chest with a cracked brown hand. "May evil remain far from you, doctor. Those women out there are all from the cells of the prostitutes, drug traffickers, pickpockets, and beggars, and they're all bitches."

Laughing, I replied, "But they are free to walk as they wish in the courtyard while we are caged in here."

"The longest day has an end. Just two or three weeks and the difficult period will be over. And what's in the courtyard after all? Nothing more than there is in this enclosure. Dirt and more dirt."

"There's a tree."

Fathiyya the Murderess, waving flies away from the plates in front of the *shawisha*, sighed. "You've got a point, doctor. I go over to that tree every day and sit beneath it as if I'm sitting in the field in front of our house in the village."

The *shawisha* struck her on the shoulder, laughing as she did so. "That's because you're a peasant and daughter of a peasant, but she's a doctor—she's not familiar with the field or the house in your poor country town."

Her laugh resembled that of my peasant grandmother, the mother of my father.

Fathiyya's small eyes gazed at the *shawisha*. Only now did I see those eyes fully—a glittering brightness to dazzle one's eyes and a strong, steady gaze. Only now did I comprehend that she might be capable of murder: previously, I had thought that she was unable even to kill a gnat.

"Our poor country town, Nabawiyya?" she said. "Poor *shawisha*!"

The *shawisha* went on as if uninterrupted. "We're all poor, all the peasants are poor, and poverty is nothing to be ashamed of. Nothing's a shame except shame itself."

Fathiyya laughed. "No shame but the Law of Shame. Isn't that so, doctor?"

"By God, Fathiyya, I believe you're right," I said.

Nawal El Saadawi, from *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*. El Saadawi studied medicine at Cairo University and at the Egyptian health ministry until she was dismissed for writing *Women and Sex*, which criticizes female circumcision and the practice of virginity testing. She later researched neuroses in women at Ain Shams University, which provided material for her novel *Woman at Point Zero*, about a prostitute who murders her pimp. In 1981 she was sent to prison, where she used smuggled eyeliner and stolen toilet paper to begin writing this memoir.

## 1850: Paris

### SELF-RELIANCE

Man is freer than is usually believed.

He depends a great deal on his environment, but not as much as he surrenders to it. A large part of our destiny lies in our hands. One should grasp it and not let it go. But understand this: people allow the external world to overcome them, to captivate them against their will; they renounce their independence, depending on all occasions not on themselves but on the world, pulling ever tighter the knots that bind them to it. They expect from the world all the good and evil in life; the last thing they rely on is themselves. With such childish submission, the fatal power of the external becomes invincible; to enter into battle with it seems madness. Yet this terrible power wanes from the moment when in a man's soul, instead of self-sacrifice and despair, instead of fear and submission, there arises the simple question:

"Am I really so fettered to my environment in life and death that I have no possibility of freeing myself from it even when I have in fact lost all touch with it, when I want nothing from it and am indifferent to its bounty?"

I am not saying that this protest in the name of the independence and self-reliance of the individual is easy. It is not freely torn from the breast of man. Either long personal trials and misfortunes precede it, or else those hard times when the more man understands the world, the more he is at odds with it; when all the bonds that link him to the external world have become chains; when he feels that he is right in spite of events and the masses; when he realizes that he is an enemy, a stranger, and not a member of a large family to which he belongs.

Outside us everything changes, everything vacillates. We are standing on the edge of a precipice and we see it crumbling. Twilight descends, and no guiding star appears in the sky. We shall find no haven but in ourselves, in the consciousness of our unlimited freedom, of our

Gendarmes, soldiers, and Resistance fighters escorting German prisoners following the liberation of Paris, 1944.





autocratic independence. Saving ourselves in such a fashion, we take our stand on that open, manly ground that alone makes possible the development of a free existence in society—if it is at all possible for humanity.

If only people wanted to save themselves instead of saving the world, to liberate themselves instead of liberating humanity, how much they would do for the salvation of the world and the liberation of humanity!

The dependence of man on his environment and his epoch is indubitable. It is all the stronger for half the ties being fastened outside his consciousness. There is the physiological tie against which the will and the brain can rarely struggle; there is the hereditary element that comes to us, like our facial features, at birth, and that constitutes the link between the present generation and all those that have gone before; then there

*Complete independence through truth and nonviolence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, color, or creed.*

—Mahatma Gandhi, 1941

is the physiologico-moral element, education, which grafts man onto history and the present day. Finally, there is the conscious element. The environment into which a man is born and the epoch in which he lives lead him to participate in whatever is happening around him, to continue what was begun by his fathers. It is natural that he should become attached to that which surrounds him, for he cannot but reflect in and through himself his times and his environment.

But it is precisely in the form of the reflection that his independence manifests itself. The reaction provoked in man by his environment is the response of his personality to the influence of the milieu. This response can be full of understanding as well as full of contradiction. The moral independence of man is just as irrefutably true and real as his dependence on his milieu, with this difference: that one is in inverse relation to the other. The greater the awareness,

the greater the independence; the weaker the awareness, the stronger the ties with the environment, the more the environment absorbs the individual. In this way, instinct without awareness does not reach true independence, and then man's self-reliance manifests itself either as the wild freedom of an animal or in those rare, spasmodic, and inconsistent denials of this or that aspect of society called crimes.

The awareness of independence does not necessarily imply a break with the milieu. Self-reliance does not necessarily involve hostility to society. The milieu does not always stand in the same relation to the world and consequently does not always provoke resistance on the part of the individual.

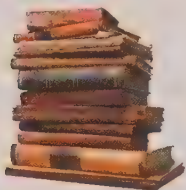
There are periods when man is free in a common cause. Then the activity toward which every energetic nature strives coincides with the aspirations of the society in which he lives. At such times—which are rare enough—everything flings itself into the whirlpool of events and in it finds life, joy, suffering, and death. Only natures of unique genius, like Goethe, stand aside, while natures that are colorless and common remain indifferent. Even those who fight against the mainstream are also carried away and find satisfaction in the real struggle. The émigrés were just as absorbed by the Revolution as the Jacobins. In such times there is no need to talk of self-sacrifice and devotion. They appear of their own accord and very easily. None retreat because all believe. There are, ultimately, no sacrifices. What seem like sacrifices to onlookers are actions that are simple fulfillment of desires, a natural mode of behavior.

**Alexander Herzen**, from *"Omnia Mea Mecum Porto."* Herzen was born to a wealthy nobleman and his German mistress in Moscow in 1812, the year Napoleon Bonaparte's army invaded Russia. In December 1825 the revolutionary Decembrists attempted to overthrow Tsar Nicholas I. The plot failed, and the group's leaders were hanged that month; many supporters were exiled to Siberia. In "the darkness that followed," Herzen later recalled, intellectual activity languished: "The blood flowed back to the heart, and all activity was forced to ferment and burrow underground."



## Great Escapes

*Notable paths to freedom*



**Escapee:** Dionysius

**Place and time:** Rome, 46 BC

**Escape:** When Dionysius, an enslaved librarian, fled the estate of his master, the statesman Cicero, he took with him a stash of valuable books. "It is a small matter in itself," Cicero wrote to his friend Publius Sulpicius Rufus, governor of Dalmatia, "yet my vexation is serious."

**Aftermath:** Although Cicero's friends reported two sightings of Dionysius over the following years, first in Narona and later among the Illyrian Vardaei tribe, the librarian was never recaptured.



**Escapee:** Harry Houdini

**Place and time:**  
Boston, 1911

**Escape:** Accepting a challenge from a group of Boston businessmen, Houdini was shackled with handcuffs and leg irons and sewn into the embalmed carcass of a 1,500-pound sea turtle. He emerged fifteen minutes later.

**Aftermath:** According to the *Boston Globe*, Houdini boasted to his audience that he had done "Jonah one better, because Jonah's whale was alive and possessed but a normal aroma."

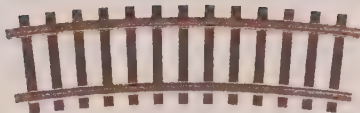


**Escapee:** Hugo Grotius

**Place and time:**  
Gelderland, 1621

**Escape:** Sentenced to life imprisonment for supporting the Remonstrants, a religiously tolerant reform group opposed by the Calvinist establishment, Grotius escaped by hiding in a large trunk said to contain dirty laundry and borrowed books.

**Aftermath:** After the trunk was delivered to a friend, Grotius fled to Antwerp before moving on to Paris, where his family later joined him.



**Escapees:** More than 150 rhesus monkeys

**Place and time:** Massapequa, NY, 1935

**Escape:** When Charles Selner, a zookeeper at Frank Buck's Jungle Camp Park, forgot to remove a plank bridging a moat, scores of rhesus monkeys—purportedly led by a mischievous male named Capone—swarmed off their island enclosure and out of the zoo.

**Aftermath:** Before being recaptured, fifty of the monkeys ended up playing along the tracks of the Long Island Rail Road, forcing a train to make an emergency stop.

**Escapees:** 109 Union Army prisoners of war

**Place and time:**  
Richmond, VA, 1864

**Escape:** Using makeshift picks and their fingernails, prisoners dug a sixty-foot tunnel through a fireplace and into a storeroom outside the Confederacy's Libby Prison.

**Aftermath:** More than half of the soldiers made it back to Union territory alive; two drowned while fleeing, and the rest were recaptured.



**Escapee:**  
Victor Folke Nelson  
**Place and time:**  
Boston, 1921

**Escape:** While being led to his cell at Charlestown State

Prison, where he was to be incarcerated for robbery, Nelson made a run for it, evading guards as he climbed up to a barred window and squeezed himself out, dropping more than twenty feet to the railroad tracks below.

**Aftermath:** Four months later, Thomas Mott Osborne, the progressive penologist who had been Nelson's warden during a previous sentence, persuaded Nelson to return voluntarily to prison.

## 1917: New York City

### PATRIOT GAMES

When they got ashore Charley and Doc went to the Broadway Central Hotel together. Doc lent Charley a good suit and took him down to the enlistment office of the ambulance corps that was in an important lawyer's office in a big shiny office building down in the financial district. The gentleman who signed the boys up was a New York lawyer and he talked about their being gentlemen volunteers and behaving like gentlemen and being a credit to the cause of the Allies and the American flag and civilization that the brave French soldiers had been fighting for so many years in the trenches.

There were flags on every building. They walked past business block after business block looking for Times Square. Everywhere people

were reading newspapers. At Fourteenth they heard a drumbeat and a band and waited at the corner to see what regiment it would be but it was only the Salvation Army. By the time they got to Madison Square it was the dinner hour and the streets were deserted. It began to drizzle a little and the flags up Broadway and Fifth Avenue hung limp from their poles.

They went into the Hofbrau to eat. Charley thought it looked too expensive but Doc said it was his party. A man was on a stepladder over the door screwing the bulbs into an electric sign of an American flag. The restaurant was draped with American flags inside and the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" every other number, so that they kept having to get to their feet. "What do they think this is, settin' up exercise?" grumbled Doc.

There was one group at a round table in the corner that didn't get up when the band

*Armida Binding the Sleeping Rinaldo with Flowers, by Willem van Mieris, 1709.*



played "The Star-Spangled Banner," but sat there quietly talking and eating as if nothing had happened. People around the restaurant began to stare at them and pass comments. "I bet they're...Huns...German spies...pacifists." There was an army officer at a table with a girl who got red in the face whenever he looked at them. Finally a waiter, an elderly German, went up to them and whispered something.

"I'll be damned if I will," came the voice from the table in the corner. Then the army officer went over to them and said something about courtesy to our national anthem. He came away redder in the face than ever. He was a little man with bowlegs squeezed into brightly polished puttees. "Dastardly pro-Germans," he sputtered as he sat down. Immediately he had to get up because the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." "Why don't you call the police, Cyril?" the girl who was with him said. By this time people from all over the restaurant were advancing on the round table.

Doc pulled Charley's chair around. "Watch this; it's going to be good."

A big man with a Texas drawl yanked one of the men out of his chair. "You git up or git out."

"You people have no right to interfere with us," began one of the men at the round table. "You express your approval of the war getting up, we express our disapproval by..."

There was a big woman with a red hat with a plume on it at the table who kept saying, "Shut up; don't talk to 'em." By this time the band had stopped. Everybody clapped as hard as he could and yelled, "Play it again; that's right." The waiters were running around nervously and the proprietor was in the center of the floor mopping his bald head.

The army officer went over to the orchestra leader and said, "Please play our national anthem again." At the first bar he came stiffly to attention. The other men rushed the round table.

The table was upset and the party began backing off toward the door. The woman with the red hat picked up a bowl of lobster mayonnaise and was holding back the crowd by chucking handfuls of it in their faces. At that

moment three cops appeared and arrested the damn pacifists. Everybody stood around wiping mayonnaise off his clothes. The band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" again and everybody tried to sing but it didn't make much of an effect because nobody knew the words.

After that Doc and Charley went to a bar to have a whiskey sour. Charley got to talking to a young narrow-faced fellow at the bar who had just been to a peace meeting at Madison Square Garden. Charley pricked his ears up when the fellow said there'd be a revolution in New York if they tried to force conscription on the country. His name was Benny Compton and he'd been studying law at New York University. Charley went and sat with him at a table with another fellow who was from Minnesota and who was a

*Freedom is about the willingness of every single human being to cede to lawful authority a great deal of discretion about what you do.*

—Rudy Giuliani, 1999

reporter on *The Call*. Charley asked them about the chances of working his way through the engineering school. He'd about decided to back out of this ambulance proposition. But they didn't seem to think there was much chance if you hadn't any money saved up to start on. The Minnesota man said New York was no place for a poor man.

"Aw, hell; I guess I'll go to the war," said Charley.

"It's the duty of every radical to go to jail first," said Benny Compton. "Anyway, there'll be a revolution. The working class won't stand for this much longer."

"If you want to make some jack the thing to do is to go over to Bayonne and get a job in a munitions factory," said the man from Minnesota in a tired voice.

"A man who does that is a traitor to his class," said Benny Compton.

"A working stiff's in a hell of a situation," said Charley. "Damn it, I don't want to spend all my life patchin' up tin lizzies at seventy-five a month."



## c. 1151: Rupertsberg

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The will warms an action, the mind receives it, and thought bodies it forth. The understanding, however, discerns an action by the process of knowing good and evil just as the angels also have an understanding that loves good and hates evil. And just as the body has a heart, so too the soul has understanding, which exercises its power in one part of the soul just as the will does in another.

How does this happen? The will in fact has great power in the soul. How does this come about? The soul stands, so to speak, in the corner of the house—that is, in the firm support of the heart—like a man standing in the corner of a house in order to survey the whole house and supervise its running. He raises his right arm to give a sign and points out things useful to the house as he turns toward the east. The soul does likewise on the roadways of the whole body when she looks toward the rising of the sun. The soul uses the will, as it were like her right arm, as a firm support for the veins and the bones and the movement of the whole body, for the will directs every action, whether for good or ill.

**Hildegard of Bingen**, from *Scivias*. *Around the age of eight, Hildegard was sent to live as a companion to the anchoress Jutta von Sponheim. When Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard succeeded her as leader of the community she had built. Five years later Hildegard saw “a great splendor” and heard a voice instructing her to “say and write what you see and hear.” The result was this text, a compilation of her visions, which she began to record on wax tablets. Upon reading it, Bernard of Clairvaux sent it to the pope, who acknowledged Hildegard’s holiness.*

“Didn’t Eugene V. Debs say, ‘I want to rise with the ranks, not from them?’”

“After all, Benny, ain’t you studyin’ night an’ day to get to be a lawyer an’ get out of the workin’ class?” said the man from Minnesota.

“That is so I can be of some use in the struggle...I want to be a well-sharpened instrument. We must fight capitalists with their own weapons.”

“I wonder what I’ll do when they suppress *The Call*.”

“They won’t dare suppress it.”

“Sure they will. We’re in this war to defend the Morgan loans...They’ll use it to clear up opposition at home, sure as my name’s Johnson.”

“Talking of that, I got some dope. My sister, see, she’s a stenographer...she works for J. Ward Moorehouse, the public relations counsel, you know...he does propaganda for the Morgans and the Rockefellers. Well, she said that all this year he’s been working with a French secret mission. The big interests are scared to death of a revolution in France. They paid him ten thousand dollars for his services. He runs pro-war stuff through a feature syndicate. And they call this a free country.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised at anything,” said the man from Minnesota, pouring himself out the last of the bottle of wine. “Why, any one of us may be a government agent or a spy right at this minute.” The three of them sat there looking at each other. It gave Charley chills down his spine.

“That’s what I’m tryin’ to tell ye...my sister, she knows all about it, see, on account of workin’ in this guy’s office...It’s a plot of the big interests, Morgan an’ them, to defeat the workers by sendin’ ’em off to the war. Once they get you in the army you can’t howl about civic liberty or the Bill of Rights...They can shoot you without trial, see?”

In front of the Cosmopolitan Café a man was speaking on a soapbox. As the people came out of the theater they surged around him. Doc and Charley edged their way through to see what the trouble was. They could only catch scraps of what the man was shouting in a hoarse, barking voice:

“A few days ago I was sittin’ in the Cooper Institute listenin’ to Eugene Victor Debs, and what was he sayin’?...‘What is this civilization, this democracy that the bosses are asking you workers to give your lives to save, what does it mean to you except wage slavery, what is...?’”

“Hey, shut up, youse...If you don’t like it, go back to where you came from,” came voices from the crowd.

“Freedom to work so that the bosses can get rich...Opportunity to starve to death if you get fired from your job.”



*For the Salvation, Liberation, and Freedom of Our People, We Will Not Hesitate to Either Kill or Die!*, by Emory Douglas, c. 1970.

Doc and Charley were shoved from behind. The man toppled off his box and disappeared. The whole end of the avenue filled with a milling crowd. Doc was sparring with a big man in overalls. A cop came between them hitting right and left with his billy. Doc hauled off to slam the cop but Charley caught his arm and pulled him out of the scrimmage.

"Hey, for Chrissake, Doc, this ain't the war yet," said Charley. Doc was red in the face. "Ah didn't like that guy's looks," he said.

Behind the cops two police cars with big searchlights were charging the crowd. Arms, heads, hats, jostling shoulders, riot sticks rising and falling stood out black against the tremendous white of the searchlights. Charley pulled Doc against the plate-glass window of the café.

"Today the voikers run before the cops, but soon it will be the cops run before the voikers," someone yelled. Someone else started singing the "Marseillaise." Voices joined. Doc and Charley were jammed with their shoulders against the plate glass. Behind them the café was full of faces swimming in blue crinkly tobacco smoke like fish in an aquarium. The plate glass suddenly smashed. People in the café

were hopping to their feet. "Look out for the Cossacks," a voice yelled.

A cordon of cops was working down the avenue. The empty pavement behind them widened. The other way mounted police were coming out of Houston Street. In the open space a patrol wagon parked. Cops were shoving men and women into it.

Doc and Charley ducked past a mounted policeman who was trotting his horse with a great clatter down the inside of the sidewalk and shot around the corner. The Bowery was empty and dark. They walked west toward the hotel.

"My God," said Charley, "you almost got us locked up that time...I'm all set to go to France now, and I want go."

**John Dos Passos**, from *The 42nd Parallel*. *Dos Passos began this novel, the first of his U.S.A. trilogy, in late 1927 with the idea of creating a collage of contemporary reportage. He signed a publishing contract the following year and used the advance to fund a trip to the Soviet Union, where he planned to study socialism. "I fell madly in love with that book," novelist Mary McCarthy wrote of *The 42nd Parallel* in a 1984 essay on political fiction. "It was the Book of Lancelot for me...I went to the library and looked up every line that Dos Passos had published."*



## 1983: Nakuru

ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL

If I tell you where I am sick  
You ask prison officers  
“Is that so?”  
You treat me to satisfy prison officers  
And not to cure my disease.  
You consult police and prison officers  
Before you prescribe me anything.

Prison doctors,  
You recommend that poor food  
Is wholesome for me.  
You recommend that my health is all right  
With a sisal mat and two worn-out dirty blankets for my beddings  
You recommend me fit for hard labor  
When I am so sick that I am on the verge of death  
You refuse to recommend for me good food

*By Force Toward Freedom, with Love Toward Unity! (detail), by Alphonse Mucha, c. 1910.*





When my ailing health desperately needs it  
You shut your eyes to  
Disease-causing prison conditions  
And pretend to be an enemy of diseases  
That are born out of those very conditions.

You free prison authorities from blame  
When they murder me with their brutality  
You recommend that I am fit  
To be given sterilizing strokes  
You recommend that I am fit  
To be hanged  
You have become servants of death.

Prison doctors,  
Your spotlessly white robes  
Deceive us  
They make you look clean  
But in your service of death and oppression  
You “are like unto whited sepulchres  
Which indeed appear beautiful outward  
But are within full of dead men’s bones  
And of all uncleanness.”

Doctors,  
Serve life  
Fight death  
Unchain prisoners’ and detainees’ health  
From the shackles of prison oppression  
Don’t be in prison to imprison life  
Be in prison to give free rein to life  
Be in prison to alleviate suffering and oppression  
And not increase and excuse them.  
If you let prisoners see liberators  
If you let prisoners see  
The antitheses of prison guards and officers  
In you let prisoners see hope and life.

**Koigi wa Wamwere**, from *Conscience on Trial*. Koigi became a member of Kenya’s Parliament in 1979, representing Nakuru, in the Great Rift Valley. He formed the National Democratic and Human Rights Organization to investigate political violence that had reportedly killed over 1,500 people and displaced more than 300,000 others in the region. “As a Kenyan warrior,” he wrote in his 2002 memoir *I Refuse to Die*, “I knew that though I might take up gun, spear, and shield, it would not be to raid other communities...It would mean developing the whole country and promoting freedom for all.”

## c. 900: Basra

### ANIMAL RIGHTS

It is said that when the race of Adam began to reproduce and multiply, humans spread across the earth, land, and sea, mountain and plain, everywhere freely and securely seeking their own ends. At first, when they were few, they lived in fear, hiding from the many wild animals and beasts of prey, taking refuge on the mountain-tops and hills, sheltering in caves, and eating fruit from the trees, vegetables from the ground, and the seeds of plants. They clothed themselves in tree leaves against the heat and cold, wintering where it was warm and summering where it was cool. But then they built cities and villages on the plains and settled there.

They enslaved such cattle as cows, sheep, and camels, and beasts such as horses, asses, and mules. They hobbled and bridled them and put them to work—riding, hauling, plowing, and

threshing. They wore these creatures out in service, with toil beyond their strength. Beasts that had roamed the woodlands and wilds unhindered, in search of pasture, water, and all their other needs, were checked and trammelled.

The years went by, and Muhammad was sent, may God bless him. He called men and jinn to God and to Islam. One band of jinn answered his call and became good Muslims. In the course of time, a king arose over the jinn, Biwarasp the Wise, known as Mardan, King Heroic. His capital was on an island lying near the equator in the midst of the Green Sea.

It happened in those days that storm winds cast up a seafaring ship on that island's shore. Aboard were men of commerce, industry, and learning, and others of the human kind. Delighted with the place, these folk decided to settle there. They built dwellings and soon began to meddle with the beasts and cattle, forcing them into service, riding them, and loading them down with burdens, as in their former

A couple bringing a slave before a magistrate to be manumitted, miniature from an early fourteenth-century Italian manuscript of Justinian's *Digestum novum*.





lands. But these beasts and cattle balked and fled. The men pursued and hunted them, using all manner of devices to take them, convinced that the animals were their runaway and rebellious slaves. When the cattle and beasts learned of this, their spokesmen and leaders gathered and came before Biwarasp the Wise to complain of the injustice and wrongs of mankind against them. The king sent a messenger to summon the parties to his court.

A group from the ship, some seventy men of diverse lands, answered the summons. Appearing before the king, the men saw him seated on his royal throne and hailed him with wishes of prosperity and a long life. The king then asked through his interpreter, "What brought you to our island? Why did you come uninvited to our land?"

One of the humans answered, "We were drawn by all that we have heard of the virtues of the king, his glorious deeds, his great generosity and noble character, his justice and impartial judgment. We have come before him that he might hear our the arguments we shall present and judge between us and these runaway slaves who deny our authority. God will uphold the righteous cause and guide Your Majesty to a sound decision, for he is the wisest of judges."

"Speak as you wish," said the king.

"I shall, Your Majesty," said the human spokesman. "These cattle, beasts of prey, and wild creatures—all animals, in fact—are our slaves. We are their masters. Some have rebelled and escaped. Others obey grudgingly and scorn our service."

The king replied, "What proof or evidence have you to back up your claims?"

A human orator of the line of Abbas rose and mounted the rostrum. "Praised be God, who formed man from water and formed his mate from him. He broadcast their seed, bore them over land and sea, favored them with dominion, and sustained them with all manner of delights, saying, 'Cattle I created for you, whence you have warmth and many uses. You eat of them and find them fair when you bring them home to rest or drive them out to pasture.' There are many other

## 1895: Chicago

### GILDED CAGE

It does not matter that the Creator has sown with stars the fields of ether and decked the earth with countless beauties for man's enjoyment. It does not matter that air and ocean teem with the wonders of innumerable forms of life to challenge man's admiration and investigation. It does not matter that nature spreads forth all her scenes of beauty and gladness and pours forth the melodies of her myriad-tongued voices for man's delectation. If liberty is ostracized and exiled, man is a slave, and the world rolls in space and whirls around the sun a gilded prison, a doomed dungeon, and though painted in all the enchanting hues that infinite art could command, it must still stand forth a blotch amid the shining spheres of the sidereal heavens, and those who cull from the vocabularies of nations, living or dead, their flashing phrases with which to apostrophize Liberty are engaged in perpetuating the most stupendous delusion the ages have known. Strike down liberty, no matter by what subtle and infernal art the deed is done, the spinal cord of humanity is sundered and the world is paralyzed by the indescribable crime.

Strike the fetters from the slave, give him liberty, and he becomes an inhabitant of the world. His soul expands beyond all boundaries. Emancipated by the genius of Liberty, he aspires to communion with all that is noble and beautiful, and feels himself allied to all the higher order of intelligences, and walks abroad, redeemed from animalism, ignorance, and superstition, a new being throbbing with glorious life.

**Eugene V. Debs**, from a speech. Debs was sentenced to six months in prison for his leadership of the 1894 Pullman Strike and delivered these remarks upon his release. Debs first began working in a rail yard at fourteen; in 1893 he organized the American Railway Union. He was later charged with espionage after giving an antiwar speech in 1918 noting that "the master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles." In his opinion upholding Debs' conviction, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. compared the case to *Schenck v. United States*, criticizing Debs' "socialist crusade."

verses in the Quran, Torah, and Gospels demonstrating that they were created for our sake and that they are our slaves and we are their masters."

"Cattle and beasts," said the king, "you have heard the Quranic verses this human



Noblemen of Brabant presenting a petition for religious freedom, detail of an engraving by Frans Hogenberg, c. 1570.

has adduced to support his claims. What say you to this?"

The spokesman for the beasts, a mule, rose and said: "Your Majesty, there is nothing in the passages this human cites to support his claims. These verses point only to the kindness and blessings that God bestowed on mankind. God said that he subjected them to you—just as he subjected the sun and moon, the wind and clouds. Are we to think, Your Majesty, that these heavenly bodies are also their slaves and chattels and that men are their masters? Hardly! He subjected animals to man only to help humans and keep them from harm, not, as they deludedly suppose and slanderously claim, to make them our masters and us their slaves.

"Your Majesty, we and our fathers lived on the earth before the creation of Adam, forefather of the human race. We dwelled in the countryside and roamed the country trails. Our herds went to and fro in God's land seeking sustenance and taking care of ourselves. Each of us minded his own affairs, kept to the place best suited to his needs—moor, sea, forest, mountain, or plain.

"Ages later God created Adam and made him his vice-regent on earth. His seed multiplied, spreading over the earth—land and sea, mountain and plain. Humans encroached on our ancestral lands. They captured sheep, cows, horses, mules, and asses from among us and enslaved them, subjecting them to the exhausting

toil and drudgery of hauling, plowing, drawing water, turning mills, and being ridden. They forced us to perform these tasks with beatings, bludgeonings, and every kind of duress, torture, and chastisement throughout our lives.

"Some of us fled to deserts, wastelands, or mountaintops, but the Adamites pursued us. Whoever fell into their hands was yoked, haltered, caged, and fettered. They slaughtered and flayed him, ripped open his belly, cut off his limbs and broke his bones, tore out his sinews, plucked his feathers or sheared his hair or fleece, and set him on the fire to cook or to roast on the spit, or put him to even harsher tortures ultimately beyond description. Even so, the sons of Adam are not through with us. Now they claim that this is their inviolable right, that they are our masters and we are their slaves. They treat any of us who escapes as a fugitive, rebel, and shirker—all with no proof or reason beyond outright force."

*From the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. During the tenth century a group of Arab intellectuals formed a secret fraternity in Basra, calling themselves the Brethren of Purity. This fable appeared in their philosophical encyclopedia, which drew on Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic sources to advocate for a purified, universalist religion. It begins by describing man at his best as "a noble angel, the finest of creatures," but at his worst as "the bane of creation." After hearing evidence from several animals—including a jackal, a nightingale, and a bee—the king of the jinn ultimately rules in favor of the humans.*



# 1886: London

## ARBITRARY RESTRAINT

Through the long ages of grinding slavery behind us, freedom, that unknown goal of human pilgrimage, has hovered, a veiled splendor, upon the horizon of men's hopes. Veiled in the trembling ignorance of mankind, their misty unreasoning terror of all that revealed itself as power, whether it were an apparently incomprehensible and uncontrollable natural force or the ascendancy of superior strength, ability, or cunning in human society. The inward attitude of slavish adoration toward what imposes itself from without as a fact beyond our understanding: that is the veil which hides freedom from the eyes of men. Sometimes it takes the form of the blind fear of a savage of his "medicine" or his fetish, sometimes of the equally blind reverence of an English workman for the law of his masters, and the semblance of consent to his own economic slavery wormed out of him by the farce of representation. But whatever the form, the reality is the same: ignorance, superstitious terror, cowardly submission.

What is human progress but the advance of the swelling tide of revolt against this tyranny of the nightmare of ignorant dread which has held men the slaves of external nature, of one another, and of themselves? Science and the arts; knowledge and all its varied shapes of practical application by ingenuity and skill; the binding and enlightening force of affection and social feeling; the protest of individuals and of peoples by word and deed against religious, economic, political, and social oppression. These, one and all, are weapons in the hands of the rebels against the powers of darkness sheltered behind their shield of authority, divine and human. But they are weapons not all equally effective at all times. Each has its period of special utility.

We are living at the close of an era during which the marvelous increase of knowledge left social feeling behind, and enabled the few who monopolized the newly acquired power over nature to create an artificial civilization, based upon

their exclusive claim to retain private, personal possession of the increased wealth produced.

Property—not the claim to use, but to a right to prevent others from using—enables individuals who have appropriated the means of production to hold in subjection all those who possess nothing but their vital energy and who must work that they may live. No work is possible without land, materials, and tools or machinery; thus the masters of these things are the masters also of the destitute workers and can live in idleness upon their labor, paying them in wages only enough of the produce to keep them alive, only employing so many of them as they find profitable and leaving the rest to their fate.

*As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy.*

—Abraham Lincoln, c. 1858

Such a wrong once realized is not to be borne. Knowledge cannot long be monopolized, and social feeling is innate in human nature, and both are fomenting within our hidebound society as the yeast in the dough. Our age is on the eve of a revolt against property, in the name of the common claim of all to a common share in the results of the common labor of all.

Therefore, we are socialists, disbelievers in property, advocates of the equal claims of each man and woman to work for the community as seems good to him or her—calling no man master—and of the equal claim of each to satisfy as seems good to him his natural needs from the stock of social wealth he has labored to produce. We look for this socialization of wealth not to restraints imposed by authority upon property but to the removal, by the direct personal action of the people themselves, of the restraints which secure property against the claims of popular justice. For authority and property both are manifestations of the egoistical spirit of domination, and we do not look to Satan to cast out Satan.

We have no faith in legal methods of reform. Fixed and arbitrary written law is and has always been the instrument employed by



antisocial individuals to secure their authority, whether delegated or usurped, when the maintenance of that authority by open violence has become dangerous. Social feeling and the social habits formed and corrected by common experience are the actual cement of associated life. It is the specious embodiment of a portion of this social custom in law which has made law tolerable, and even sacred in the eyes of the people it exists to enslave. But in proportion as the oppression of law is removed, the true binding force of the influence of social feeling upon individual responsibility becomes apparent and is increased. We look for the destruction of monopoly not by

the imposition of fresh artificial restraints but by the abolition of all arbitrary restraints whatever. Without law, property would be impossible, and labor and enjoyment free.

Therefore, we are anarchists, disbelievers in the government of man by man in any shape and under any pretext. The human freedom to which our eyes are raised is no negative abstraction of license for individual egoism, whether it be massed collectively as majority rule or isolated as personal tyranny. We dream of the positive freedom which is essentially one with social feeling: of free scope for the social impulses now distorted and compressed

## 1995: Casma

### DOG SHOW

Fiery rays seemed to split the day asunder, and noisy raindrops ceaselessly pounded on this adoptive land, which reached out to us while causing those ill prepared to suffer its sometimes devastating effects to flee.

The main door was slightly ajar where the security guards grouped in a little surveillance hut, located to the side of the enormous prison building: it was under these circumstances that Chiquitín, an old mongrel dog soaked by the rain and terrified by the thunder, silently entered the political prisoners' section without anyone noticing or restraining him.

Finding himself inside the prison, he began sniffing around in search of food, and was well received by the inmates; some called him by various names, while others tried to grab him in order to pet him, but he behaved fearfully, never having received this kind of attention in the past. Still others proffered food such as dried fish to him. He ate everything, and managed to finally sate his canine voracity while remaining at a prudent distance. We were all cheered by the first such visit in years, but night inevitably fell, when the screws began to lock all the barred gates in the different sections, and Chiquitín, as we had christened him, remained trapped as one more prisoner in this enormous and sinister concentric structure.

Hours passed, and when most of the inmates were asleep, suddenly the dog began to bark and to race desperately up and down all the corridors in the section, letting out a succession of heartrending howls.

This continued until he finally stopped at the barred front gate, unleashing a lacerating cry that tore us all apart. There was nothing for us to do but call on the guards stationed outside to put the hound out on the street so that we could all get some sleep.

And so it was: the head security guard gave the starting order for the inmates to call the screws with one voice; after a few minutes of loud and repeated yelling, they all came rushing in, convinced there was some medical emergency. They were greatly surprised to learn that they had been summoned to liberate a dog, and could find no way at all of explaining how it had succeeded in penetrating somewhere normally inaccessible to any human, given the panoply of safety measures on which the most secure prison in the country depended.

The prisoners were moved by the dog's behavior; nobody spoke afterward—and the silence was eloquent.

That night many of the inmates dreamed of Liberty. I was among them.

**Augusto Ernesto Llosa Giraldo, "Chiquitín."** *Llosa Giraldo, a journalist, was arrested at his home in Casma, Peru, in 1995 and charged with being a witness to a bomb blast in Cuzco nine years prior, though the police reported that he had not been in the city at the time. After the police confiscated documents from the Peruvian Journalists' Association and letters from imprisoned journalists, Llosa Giraldo was convicted of terrorism and sentenced to six years in prison. A 1997 retrial sentenced him to another five years, but he was released early, in 2000.*



Suffragettes marching on Women's Sunday, London, 1908.

by property and its guardian the law; of free scope for that individual sense of responsibility, of respect for self and for others, which is vitiated by every form of collective interference, from the enforcing of contracts to the hanging of criminals; of free scope for the spontaneity and individuality of each human being, such as is impossible when one hard-and-fast line is fitted to all conduct. Science is teaching mankind that such crime as is not the manufacture of our vile economic and legal system can only be rationally as well as humanely treated by fraternal medical care, for it results from deformity or disease, and a hard-and-fast rule of conduct enforced by condign punishment is neither guide nor remedy, nothing but a perennial source of injustice among men.

We believe each sane adult human being to possess an equal and indefeasible claim to direct his life from within by the light of his own consciousness, to the sole responsibility of guiding his own action as well as forming his own opinions. Further, we believe that the acknowledgment of this claim is a necessary preliminary to rational voluntary agreement, the only permanent basis of harmonious life in common. Therefore, we reject every method of enforcing assent as in itself a hindrance to effectual cooperation,

and further, a direct incentive to antisocial feeling. We deprecate as a wrong to human nature, individually, and therefore collectively, all use of force for the purpose of coercing others, but we assert the social duty of each to defend, by force if need be, his dignity as a free human being, and the like dignity in others, from every form of insult and oppression.

We claim for each and all the personal right and social obligation to be free. We hold the complete social recognition and acknowledgment of such a claim to be the goal of human progress in the future, as its growth has been the gauge of development of society in the past, of the advance of man from the blind social impulse of the gregarious animal to the conscious social feeling of the free human being.

**Charlotte Wilson**, from an editorial in the first issue of *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism*. Wilson was born in 1854 to a wealthy physician and his wife outside Tewkesbury; she studied at the University of Cambridge and married a stockbroker. She began to take an interest in anarchism around 1883, when Peter Kropotkin was tried for his past affiliation with the International Workingmen's Association. In 1886 Wilson formed the Freedom group with other London anarchists, inviting Kropotkin to join following his release from prison. He accepted, and together they established the anarchist paper.

## c. 1695: Montreal

### COMPANY OBSERVES MISERY

What sort of people must Europeans be? What species of creature are they? Europeans have to be forced to do good and have no other prompter for the avoidance of evil except the fear of punishment.

You see that we have no judges. What's the reason for that? It's because we never quarrel or sue one another. And what's the reason that we have no lawsuits? Because we have resolved never to accept or to make use of silver. But why do we refuse admission to silver? The reason is that we are resolved not to have laws because, since the world was a world, our ancestors lived happily without them.

For the past six years, I have bent my thoughts upon the state of the Europeans, and I cannot see anything in their actions that is not beneath a man. I truly think it is impossible for it to be otherwise as long as you stick to your measures of *mine* and *thine*. I affirm that what you call silver is the devil of devils, the tyrant of the French, the source of all evil, the bane of souls, and the slaughterhouse of the living. To pretend you can live in the country of money and at the same time save one's soul is as great a contradiction as for a man to go to the bottom of a lake to preserve his life. Money is the father of luxury, lasciviousness, intrigues, tricks, lying, treachery, falseness—in a word, all the mischief in the world. Fathers sell their children, husbands their wives, wives betray their husbands, brothers kill one another, friends are false, and all this proceeds from money. Consider this and then tell me if we are not correct in refusing to touch or so much as to look upon that cursed metal.

You fob me off very prettily when you bring in your gentlemen, your merchants, and your priests. If you were strangers to *mine* and *thine*, those kinds of men would be sunk and a leveling equality would then develop among you as it now does among the Wendat. For the first



David Triumphant, by Thomas Crawford, 1848.

thirty years after the banishing of interest, you would see a strange desolation. Those who are qualified only to eat, drink, sleep, and divert themselves would languish and die. But their descendants would be fit for our way of living. I have set forth the qualities that make a man inwardly such as he ought to be—wisdom, reason, equity, etc.—all of which are courted by the Wendat. The notion of separate individual interests knocks all these qualities on the head. A man swayed by interest can't be a man of reason.

**Kandiaronk**, from *Curious Dialogues with a Savage of Good Sense Who Has Traveled*, by Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, baron de Lahontan. Lahontan and two hundred other French soldiers were sent to New France to subdue the Great Lakes Iroquois in 1683. After his return to Europe, Lahontan published three volumes recounting his North American travels, the third of which was a series of conversations with "Adario," a Huron chief identified as Kandiaronk by David Graeber and David Wengrow, who report that in the 1690s Kandiaronk and Lahontan were regular guests of the French governor-general in Montreal.



## c. 1860: St. Petersburg

### THESE ARE BARBAROUS TIMES

Oh, tell me, who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man does nasty things only because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real, normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else? Oh, the babe! Oh, the pure, innocent child! What if it so happens that a man's advantage sometimes not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous? And if so, if there can be such a case, the whole principle falls into dust. What do you

think—are there such cases? You laugh; laugh away, gentlemen, but only answer me: Have man's advantages been reckoned up with perfect certainty? Are there not some that not only have not been included but cannot possibly be included under any classification? You see, you gentlemen have, to the best of my knowledge, taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economical formulas. Your advantages are prosperity, wealth, freedom, peace—and so on, and so on. So that the man who should, for instance, go openly and knowingly in opposition to all that list would to your thinking—and indeed mine, too, of course—be an obscurantist or an absolute madman. Would not he? But, you know, this is what is surprising: Why does it so happen that all these statisticians, sages, and lovers of humanity, when they reckon up human advantages, invariably leave out one? They don't

Cuban refugees arriving at Freedom House, Miami, 1973. Photograph by Nathan Benn.



even take it into their reckoning in the form in which it should be taken, and the whole reckoning depends upon that. It would be no greater matter; they would simply have to take it, this advantage, and add it to the list. But the trouble is that this strange advantage does not fall under any classification and does not have a place on any list. This advantage is remarkable for the very fact that it breaks down all our classifications, and continually shatters every system constructed by lovers of mankind for the benefit of mankind. In fact, it upsets everything. Before I mention this advantage to you, I want to compromise myself personally, and therefore I boldly declare that all these fine systems—all these theories for explaining to mankind their real, normal interests, in order that inevitably striving to pursue these interests they may at once become good and noble—are, in my opinion, so far mere logical exercises. Only look about you: blood is being spilled in streams, and in the merriest way, as though it were champagne. Take Napoleon—the Great and also the present one. Take North

America—the eternal Union. Take the farce of Schleswig-Holstein. Have you noticed that it is the most civilized gentlemen who have been the subtlest slaughterers, to whom the Attilas and Stenka Razins could not hold a candle, and if they are not so conspicuous as the Attilas and Stenka Razins it is simply because they are so often met with, are so ordinary, and have become so familiar to us. In any case civilization has made mankind if not more bloodthirsty at least more vilely, more loathsomely bloodthirsty. In old days he saw justice in bloodshed and with his conscience at peace exterminated those he thought proper. Now we do think bloodshed abominable, and yet we engage in this abomination—and with more energy than ever. Which is worse? Decide that for yourselves. They say that Cleopatra (excuse an instance from Roman history) was fond of sticking gold pins into her slave-girls' breasts and derived gratification from their screams and writhings. You will say that that was in the comparatively barbarous times; that these are barbarous times,

*To Visit the Imprisoned*, by Cornelis de Wael, c. 1640.





too, because, comparatively speaking, pins are stuck in even now; that though man has now learned to see more clearly than in barbarous ages, he is still far from having learned to act as reason and science would dictate. But yet you are fully convinced that he will be sure to learn when he gets rid of certain old bad habits, and when common sense and science have completely reeducated human nature and turned it in a normal direction. You are confident that then man will cease from *intentional* error and will, so to say, be compelled not to want to set his will against his normal interests. That is not all; then, you say, science itself will teach man (though to my mind it's a superfluous luxury) that he never has really had any caprice or will of his own, and that he himself is something of the nature of a piano key or the stop of an organ, and that there are, besides, things called the laws of nature, so that everything he does is not done by his willing it but is done of itself, by the laws of nature. Consequently we have only to discover these laws of nature, and man will no longer have to answer for his actions and life will become exceedingly easy for him.

In fact, those will be halcyon days. Of course there is no guaranteeing (this is my comment) that it will not be, for instance, frightfully dull then (for what will one have to do when everything will be calculated and tabulated?), but on the other hand everything will be extraordinarily rational. Of course boredom may lead you to anything. It is boredom that sets one sticking golden pins into people, but all that would not matter. What is bad (this is my comment again) is that I dare say people will be thankful for the gold pins then. Man is stupid, you know, phenomenally stupid; or rather he is not at all stupid, but he is so ungrateful that you could not find another like him in all creation. I, for instance, would not be in the least surprised if all of a sudden, apropos of nothing, in the midst of general prosperity a gentleman with an ignoble, or rather with a reactionary and ironical, countenance were to arise and, putting his arms akimbo, say to us all: "I say, gentlemen, hadn't we better kick

over the whole show and scatter rationalism to the winds simply to send these logarithms to the devil and to enable us to live once more at our own sweet foolish will!" That again would not matter, but what is annoying is that he would be sure to find followers—such is the nature of man. And all that for the most foolish reason, which, one would think, was hardly worth mentioning: that is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may

*Democracy is the menopause of Western society, the grand climacteric of the body social. Fascism is its middle-aged lust.*

—Jean Baudrillard, 1987

choose what is contrary to one's own interests, and sometimes one positively ought (that is my idea). One's own free, unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy is that very "most advantageous advantage" that we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply independent choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice.

**Fyodor Dostoevsky**, from Notes from Underground. In 1859, after returning to St. Petersburg from his exile in Siberia, Dostoevsky began working as an editor at the journal *Vremya*. In 1863 Nikolay Chernyshevsky published the novel *What Is to Be Done?*, which called for Russian society to be radically reformed by heroic individuals and depicted the imposing Crystal Palace as a future utopia. Dostoevsky wrote Notes from Underground partly as a response to Chernyshevsky's novel, rejecting its utilitarian vision of replacing moral standards with reason and progress.



## 1919: Washington, DC

### CONTEXT SENSITIVE

This is an indictment in three counts. The first charges a conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917, by causing and attempting to cause insubordination, etc., in the military and naval forces of the United States, and to obstruct the recruiting and enlistment service of the United States, when the United States was at war with the German Empire, to wit, that the defendants willfully conspired to have printed and circulated to men who had been called and accepted for military service under the act of May 18, 1917, a document set forth and alleged to be calculated to cause such insubordination and obstruction.

*Ab! Freedom is a noble thing!*

—John Barbour, 1375

The document in question, upon its first printed side, recited the first section of the Thirteenth Amendment, said that the idea embodied in it was violated by the Conscription Act, and that a conscript is little better than a convict. In impassioned language, it intimated that conscription was despotism in its worst form, and a monstrous wrong against humanity in the interest of Wall Street's chosen few. It said, "Do not submit to intimidation," but in form, at least, confined itself to peaceful measures such as a petition for the repeal of the act.

The other and later printed side of the sheet was headed "Assert Your Rights." It stated reasons for alleging that anyone violated the Constitution when he refused to recognize "your right to assert your opposition to the draft," and went on: "If you do not assert and support your rights, you are helping to deny or disparage rights which it is the solemn duty of all citizens and residents of the United States to retain." It described the arguments on the other side as coming from cunning politicians and a mercenary capitalist press, and even silent consent to the conscription law

as helping to support an infamous conspiracy. It denied the power to send our citizens away to foreign shores to shoot up the people of other lands, and added that words could not express the condemnation such cold-blooded ruthlessness deserves, etc., etc., winding up, "You must do your share to maintain, support, and uphold the rights of the people of this country." Of course, the document would not have been sent unless it had been intended to have some effect, and we do not see what effect it could be expected to have upon persons subject to the draft except to influence them to obstruct the carrying of it out. The defendants do not deny that the jury might find against them on this point.

We admit that, in many places and in ordinary times, the defendants, in saying all that was said in the circular, would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done. The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting *fire* in a theater and causing a panic. It does not even protect a man from an injunction against uttering words that may have all the effect of force. The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent. It is a question of proximity and degree. When a nation is at war, many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight, and that no court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right.

**Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.**, from *Schenck v. United States*. This decision upholding the conviction of Charles Schenck established the Supreme Court's "clear and present danger" test, which limited the First Amendment's protection of free speech. The doctrine was replaced in 1969 with the "imminent lawless action" test, holding that speech can be limited if it is likely to inspire unlawful activity before such activity can be prevented. Theodore Roosevelt appointed Holmes to the court in 1902 but came to regret his decision when Holmes advised it against enforcing the Sherman Antitrust Act in a monopoly case. "Out of a banana I could carve a firmer backbone," Roosevelt complained.

## C. 1828: Beijing

### TAKING FLIGHT

This raising butterflies resembles raising daughters:  
Once you have raised them, you can't keep them any longer.  
A person's heart may still be filled with love,  
But butterflies already long for distant parts.

You want to set them free, but cannot give them up;  
If you don't set them free, they may not find a partner.  
So I'll allow you now to find your way—  
I'll hang the pearly curtain on its hook.

When first they fly, they still stay close to home,  
When next they fly, they cross the garden wall.  
I'm not concerned about the butterflies' thin dress,  
I am concerned about the winds and rains of fall.

If you succeed in finding a fit partner,  
Please come together, entering my room.  
The dreams tonight here in my flower cell  
Will be more somber than green window gauze.

**Wanyan Jinchi**, "Releasing Butterflies." Along with her husband, a member of the Imperial Guard in Beijing, Wanyan arranged for her youngest daughter to be married to a Mongol prince working as a low-ranking official in Kulun, present-day Ulaanbaatar, through an intermarriage policy promoted by the Manchu government. Wanyan composed this poem after her daughter left for Mongolia. Eventually her son-in-law was reassigned to Beijing, and Wanyan took charge of raising her granddaughter, Naxun Lanbao, who later compiled a book of her grandmother's poems.

Woman jumping, England, c. 1965. Photograph by Tony Boxall.





# 1952: Lyon

## RIGHTS STATEMENT

Haven't I got better things to do on this earth than avenge the Blacks of the seventeenth century?

Is it my duty to confront the problem of black truth on this earth, this earth that is already trying to sneak away?

Must I confine myself to the justification of a facial profile?

I have not the right as a man of color to research why my race is superior or inferior to another.

I have not the right as a man of color to wish for a guilt complex to crystallize in the white man regarding the past of my race.

*Communities do not cease to be colonies because they are independent.*

—Benjamin Disraeli, 1863

I have not the right as a man of color to be preoccupied with ways of trampling on the arrogance of my former master.

I have neither the right nor the duty to demand reparations for my subjugated ancestors.

There is no black mission; there is no white burden.

I find myself one day in a world where things are hurtful; a world where I am required to fight; a world where it is always a question of defeat or victory.

I find myself, me, a man, in a world where words are fringed with silence; in a world where the other hardens endlessly.

No, I have not the right to come and shout my hatred at the white man. It is not my duty to murmur my gratitude to the white man.

Here is my life caught in the noose of existence. Here is my freedom, which sends back to me my own reflection. No, I have not the right to be black.

It is not my duty to be this or that.

If the white man challenges my humanity, I will show him by weighing down on his life with all my weight of a man that I am not this grinning "Y'a bon Banania" figure that he persists in imagining I am.

I find myself one day in the world, and I acknowledge one right for myself: the right to demand human behavior from the other.

And one duty: the duty never to let my decisions renounce my freedom.

I do not want to be the victim of the ruse of a black world.

My life must not be devoted to making an assessment of black values.

There is no white world; there is no white ethic—any more than there is a white intelligence.

There are from one end of the world to the other men who are searching.

I am not a prisoner of history. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction.

I must constantly remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life.

In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself.

I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further.

And we see that through a specific problem there emerges one of action. Placed in this world, in a real-life situation, "embarked," as Pascal would have it, am I going to accumulate weapons?

Am I going to ask today's white men to answer for the slave traders of the seventeenth century?

Am I going to try by every means available to cause guilt to burgeon in their souls?

And grief, when they are confronted with the density of the past? I am a black man, and tons of chains, squalls of lashes, and rivers of spit stream over my shoulders.

But I have not the right to put down roots. I have not the right to admit the slightest patch of being into my existence.

I have not the right to become mired by the determinations of the past.

# Antislavery Road Show

*"The 'underground railroad,'" historian Eric Foner wrote in 2015, "should be understood not as a single entity but as an umbrella term for local groups that employed numerous methods to assist fugitives, some public and entirely legal, some flagrant violations of the law."*  
Since 1998, the U.S. National Park Service's Network to Freedom program has identified nearly seven hundred historic sites with a documented connection to these groups.

## 1 Abyssinian Meeting House

Portland, Maine

Built in 1828, this building served as a place of worship for Black Mainers as well as a safe haven for fugitive slaves, according to a descendant of its first minister.

## 2 Col. William Hubbard House

Ashtabula, Ohio

Also known as "Mother Hubbard's Cupboard," William and Catherine Hubbard's house was a last stop before Canada for many fugitives. A tunnel connecting the barn to Lake Erie allowed runaways to board a waiting boat and cross to Ontario.

## 3 Blanchard Hall

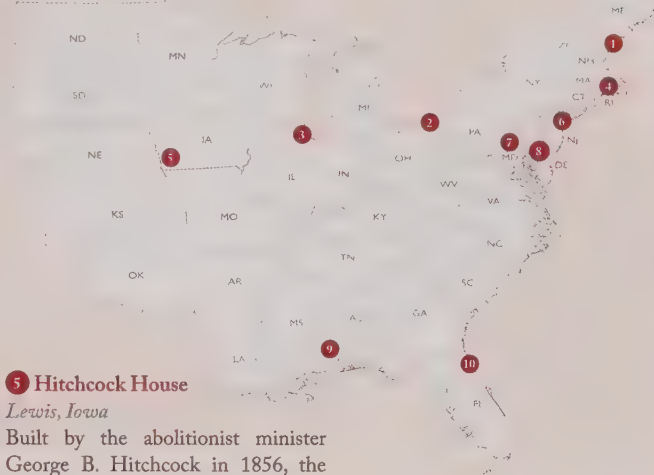
Wheaton, Illinois

An ornate building on the campus of Wheaton College hosted fugitives en route to Canada. One witness wrote in 1861 that "so strong was public sentiment that runaway slaves were perfectly safe in the college building even when no attempt was made to conceal" them.

## 4 Nathan and Polly Johnson House

New Bedford, Massachusetts

During Frederick Douglass' escape from Baltimore, he stayed with Nathan and Polly Johnson. Here he decided to change his last name from Bailey to Douglass, a nod to a character in Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*, which Nathan was reading at the time.



## 5 Hitchcock House

Lewis, Iowa

Built by the abolitionist minister George B. Hitchcock in 1856, the house contains an unusual room in the basement believed to have been built to house escaped slaves, with an entrance concealed by a cupboard.

## 6 Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims

Brooklyn, New York

In 1854 Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, encouraged his congregation to send boxes of Sharps rifles marked BIBLES to Kansas to support efforts to fight pro-slavery settlers.

## 7 McAllister's Mill

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

For decades McAllister's Mill, popularly referred to as Jimmy's, offered safe harbor to more than two hundred escaped slaves, who sometimes hid in a chamber behind the mill's waterwheel.

## 8 Abigail and Elizabeth

Goodwin House

Salem, New Jersey

Abigail Goodwin, a founding member of the Female Benevolent Society,

offered assistance to escaped slaves. In 1855 she wrote to the abolitionist William Still, "Would it not be well to get up a committee of women to provide clothes for fugitive females?"

## 9 Hal's Kingdom

Carlton, Alabama

In the 1820s an escaped slave named Hal hid in a swamp between the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers, where other fugitives joined him. Local planters attempted to recapture the group, leading to a gunfight that killed Hal and many others.

## 10 Castillo de San Marcos

St. Augustine, Florida

In 1687 nine enslaved people fled from colonial Carolina to this fort in St. Augustine. When an English official came seeking them the following year, the Spanish governor refused to hand them over. The escape inspired others to head for Florida; in 1693 Charles II of Spain decreed "liberty to all" who reached his colonies.

I am not a slave to slavery that dehumanized my ancestors. For many black intellectuals, European culture has a characteristic of exteriority. Furthermore, in human relationships, the Western world can feel foreign to the black man. Not wanting to be thought of as a poor relation, an adopted son, or a bastard child, will he feverishly try to discover a black civilization?

Above all, let there be no misunderstanding. We are convinced that it would be of enormous interest to discover a black literature or architecture from the third century before Christ. We would be overjoyed to learn of the existence of a correspondence between some black philosopher and Plato. But we can absolutely not see how this fact would change the





*Prisoners on a Projecting Platform*, from the series *Imaginary Prisons*, by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1761.

lives of eight-year-old kids working in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe.

There should be no attempt to fixate man, since it is his destiny to be unleashed.

The density of history determines none of my acts.

I am my own foundation.

And it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given that I initiate my cycle of freedom.

The misfortune of the man of color is having been enslaved.

The misfortune and inhumanity of the white man are having killed man somewhere.

And still today they are organizing this dehumanization rationally. But I, a man of color, insofar as I have the possibility of existing absolutely, have not the right to confine myself in a world of retroactive reparations.

I, a man of color, want but one thing:

May man never be instrumentalized. May the subjugation of man by man—that is to say, of me by another—cease. May I be allowed to discover and desire man wherever he may be.

The black man is not. No more than the white man.

Both have to move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born. Before

embarking on a positive voice, freedom needs to make an effort at disalienation. At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child.

It is through self-consciousness and renunciation, through a permanent tension of his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.

Superiority? Inferiority?

Why not simply try to touch the other, feel the other, discover each other?

Was my freedom not given me to build the world of *you*, man?

We would like the reader to feel with us the open dimension of every consciousness.

My final prayer:

O my body, always make me a man who questions!

**Frantz Fanon**, from *Black Skin, White Masks*. Born in Fort-de-France, Martinique, Fanon joined the Free French forces in 1943, serving in Morocco and Algeria. After the war he studied medicine at the University of Lyon and then moved to Algeria to lead a hospital psychiatry department. He joined the National Liberation Front in 1954 and later became the Algerian ambassador to Ghana. "His violence was nonviolent; the violence of justice, of pureness, uncompromising," wrote the poet Aimé Césaire after Fanon's death from leukemia at the age of thirty-seven.



## 73: Judea

### THE GREATER SHARE OF HONOR

My loyal followers, long ago we resolved to serve neither the Romans nor anyone else but only God, who alone is the true and righteous Lord of men. Now the time has come that bids us prove our determination by our deeds. At such a time we must not disgrace ourselves: we have never submitted to slavery, even when it brought no danger with it. We must not choose slavery now, and with it penalties that will mean the end of everything if we fall into the hands of the Romans. We were the first of all to revolt and shall be the last to break off the struggle. And I think that it is God who has given us the privilege to die nobly and as freemen, unlike others who were unexpectedly defeated. In our case it is evident that daybreak will end our resistance, but we are free to choose an honorable death with our loved ones. This our enemies cannot prevent, however earnestly they may pray to take us alive; nor can we defeat them in battle.

From the very first, when we were bent on claiming our freedom but suffered such constant misery at one another's hands and worse at the enemy's, we ought perhaps to have read the mind of God and realized that his once beloved Jewish race had been sentenced to extinction. If he had remained gracious or only slightly indignant with us, he would not have shut his eyes to the destruction of so many thousands or allowed his most holy city to be burned to the ground by our enemies. We hoped, or so it would seem, that of all the Jewish race we alone would come through safely, still in possession of our freedom, as if we had committed no sin against God and taken part in no crime—we who had taught the others! Now see how he shows the folly of our hopes, plunging us into miseries more terrible than any we had dreamed of. Not even the impregnability of our fortress has sufficed to save us, but though

we have food in abundance, ample supplies of arms, and more than enough of every other essential, God himself without a doubt has taken away all hope of survival. The fire that was being carried into the enemy lines did not turn back of its own accord toward the wall we had built. These things are God's vengeance for the many wrongs that in our madness we dared to commit against our own countrymen.

Let us pay the penalty for these wrongs not to our bitterest enemies, the Romans, but to God—by our own hands. It will be easier to bear. Let our wives die unabused, our

*There is no easy walkover to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow again and again before we reach the mountaintops of our desire.*

—Jawaharlal Nehru, 1939

children without knowledge of slavery. After that, let us do each other an ungrudging kindness, preserving our freedom as a glorious winding-sheet. But first let our possessions and the whole fortress go up in flames. It will be a bitter blow to the Romans, I know, to find our persons beyond their reach and nothing left for them to loot. Let us spare only one thing, our store of food—it will bear witness when we are dead to the fact that we perished not through want but because, as we resolved at the beginning, we chose death rather than slavery.

**Eleazar ben Ya'ir**, from Josephus' *The Jewish War*. Josephus described the Sicarii as continuing the Jewish "fourth philosophy," primarily concerned with resisting a Roman census. Eleazar, a descendant of a founder of the rebel group, led the Sicarii in capturing and defending the fortress of Masada, where he made this speech; it is believed to have been recounted to Josephus by a woman who survived the ensuing mass suicide by hiding in a cistern. Archaeological excavations of Masada in the 1960s recovered only three skeletons within the fortress; later archaeologists have contested whether the site's fabled last stand ever occurred.



*The Temple of Paradise*, by Jean-Jacques Perrissin, c. 1570.

## 1969: New York City

### UPRISING

From the time of the World's Fair in 1964 to the beginning of gay liberation, the Stonewall uprising in 1969, the city was repeatedly being cleaned up. Subway toilets were always being locked shut. Bars were constantly raided. I remember one, the Blue Bunny, up in the Times Square area near the bar where they first danced the twist. There was a tiny dance floor at the back. If a suspicious-looking plainclothes-

man came in (supposedly you could tell them by their big, clunky shoes), the doorman would turn on little white Christmas lights strung along the ceiling in back, and we'd break apart and stop dancing while the music roared on. I can remember a two-story bar over near the Hudson on a side street south of Christopher that was open only a week or two. When the cops rushed in, we all jumped out the second-story window onto a low adjoining graveled roof and then down a flight of stairs and onto the street. I used to go to the Everard Baths, at 28 West Twenty-Eighth Street near Broadway.



It was filthy and everyone said it was owned by the police. It didn't have the proper exits or fire extinguishers, just a deep, foul-smelling pool in the basement that looked infected. When the building caught fire in 1977, several customers died. There was no sprinkler system. It was a summer weekend.

On Fire Island it was scarcely better in those days. Of course the Suffolk County police couldn't control what went on in the dunes or along the shore at night, but in discos in both Cherry Grove and the Pines, every group of dancing men had to include at least one woman. A disco employee sat on top of a ladder and beamed a flashlight at a group of guys who weren't observing the rule. At a dance club over in the Hamptons, I recall, the men line danced and did the hully gully, but always with at least one woman in the line.

Then everything changed with the Stonewall uprising toward the end of June 1969. And it wasn't all those crew-necked white boys in the Hamptons and the Pines who changed things, but the black kids and Puerto Rican transvestites who came down to the Village on the subway (the "A-trainers"), and who were jumpy because of the extreme heat and who'd imagined that the police persecutions of the preceding years had finally wound down. The new attacks made them feel angry and betrayed. They were also worked up because Judy Garland had just died of an overdose and was lying in state at the Riverside Memorial Chapel. At the end of Christopher Street, just two blocks away, rose the imposing bulk of the Jefferson Market women's prison (now demolished to make way for a park). Angry lesbians, angrier drag queens, excessive mourning, staggering heat, racial tensions, the examples of civil disobedience set by the women's movement, the antiwar protesters, the Black Panthers—all the elements were present and only a single flame was needed to ignite the bonfire.

The Stonewall wasn't really a disco. It had a jukebox, a good one, and two big, long rooms where you could dance. Bars were open till four in the morning in New York; gay guys would

## 1228: Longxian

### THE WAY OUT

Tosotsu built three barriers and made the monks pass through them. The first barrier is studying Zen. In studying Zen the aim is to see one's own true nature. Now where is your true nature?

Second, when one realizes his own true nature, he will be free from birth and death. Now when you shut the light from your eyes and become a corpse, how can you free yourself?

Third, if you free yourself from birth and death, you should know where you are. Now your body separates into the four elements. Where are you?

Whoever can pass these three barriers will be a master wherever he stands. Whatever happens about him he will turn into Zen.

**Wumen Huikai**, from *The Gateless Gate*. *Wumen studied under a Chan master who had him spend most of his time contemplating wu, which translates as either nothingness or emptiness. Wumen later became the head monk at Longxiang Monastery, where he wrote this collection of forty-eight Zen koans while training monastic initiates. "How do you pass through this barrier that has no gate?" he asks. "To study Zen you must pass through the barrier of the ancient masters. You must completely cut off your mental constructs."*

come home from work, eat, go to bed having set the alarm for midnight, and stay out till four. Of course there were no internet sites, but also no telephone dating lines, no back rooms, and up till then no trucks or wharves open to sex.

There was a lot of street cruising and a lot of bar cruising. We had to have cool pickup lines. We were all thin from amphetamines; my diet doctor was always prescribing speed for me, and I'd still be up at six in the morning reading the Yellow Pages with great and compulsive fascination. We had long, dirty hair and untrimmed sideburns and hip-huggers and funny black boots that zipped up the side and denim cowboy shirts with pearlescent pressure-pop buttons. We had bell-bottoms. We all smoked all the time (I was up to three packs a day). We didn't have big showboat muscles or lots of attitude. Our shoulders were as narrow as our hips. We didn't look hale, but we were



healthy—this was twelve years before AIDS was first heard of and all we got was the clap. We had that a lot, maybe once a month, since no one but paranoid married men used condoms. I dated my clap doctor, who spent most of his free time copying van Gogh sunflowers.

Then there was the raid, the whimper heard round the world, the fall of our gay Bastille. On June 28, 1969, the bar was raided, and for the first time gays resisted. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms staged the raid, since they'd discovered that the liquor bottles in the bar were bootlegged and that the local police precinct was in cahoots with the Mafia owners.

*There are only two kinds of freedom in the world: the freedom of the rich and powerful, and the freedom of the artist and the monk who renounce possessions.*

—Anaïs Nin, 1940

As the patrons and workers were being led out of the bar and pushed into a paddy wagon, the angry crowd that had gathered outside began to boo. Then some of the queens inside the van began to fight back—and a few escaped. The crowd was energized by the violence.

Everyone was so pissed off over that particular police raid because once the World's Fair was over, the cops seemed to forget about us and lots of new bars had opened. There were raids, but only once a month and usually early in the evening, so as not to spoil the later, serious hours of cruising and dancing and flirting and drinking. Now we had a new, handsome mayor, John Lindsay. But he only looked better. He was in constant conflict with the unions, with antiwar protesters, with the student radicals who took over Columbia—and with the gay community.

Before the Stonewall uprising there hadn't really been much of a gay community, just guys cruising Greenwich Avenue and Christopher Street. But when the police raided Stonewall and gay men feared their bars were going to be closed once again, all hell broke loose. I was

there, just by chance, and I remember thinking it would be the first funny revolution. We were calling ourselves the Pink Panthers and doubling back behind the cops and coming out behind them on Gay Street and Christopher Street and kicking in a chorus line. We were shouting "Gay is good" in imitation of the slogan "Black is beautiful."

Up till that moment we had all thought that homosexuality was a medical term. Suddenly we saw that we could be a minority group—with rights, a culture, an agenda.

GLBT leaders like to criticize young gays for not taking the movement seriously, but don't listen to them. Just remember that at Stonewall we were defending our right to have fun, to meet each other, and to have sex.

A Black Maria had carted off half the staff and a few kicking, writhing drag queens, while the rest of the policemen waited inside with the others. I'd been walking past with a friend and now joined in, though resistance to authority made me nervous. I thought we shouldn't create a fuss. This was bad for our image. I said out loud, "Oh, come on, guys."

Yet even I got excited when the crowd started battering down the barricaded door with a ripped-up parking meter and when someone tossed lit garbage into the bar. No matter that we were defending a Mafia club. The Stonewall was a symbol, just as the leveling of the Bastille had been. No matter that only six prisoners had been in the Bastille and one of those was Sade, who clearly deserved being locked up. No one chooses the right symbolic occasion; one takes what's available.

**Edmund White**, from *City Boy*. In 1981 White co-founded Gay Men's Health Crisis with Larry Kramer to spread awareness about AIDS and offer services for HIV patients. Two years later White moved to Paris, where, after Michel Foucault's death, he helped Foucault's partner, Daniel Defert, organize the collective's French counterpart, AIDES. After his own HIV diagnosis in 1985, White wrote about the subject in the novels *The Farewell Symphony* and *The Married Man*, citing "an urgency—but for my own sake, not for anybody else's—to communicate with people about what it was like to be positive."



*Free Nelson Mandela*, by David Hammons, 1987.

## 1668: Nottinghamshire

### PLEASURE DOME DECREE

*[Enter Lady Happy and one of her attendants]*

*Servant:* Madam, you being young, handsome, rich, and virtuous, I hope you will not cast away those gifts of nature, fortune, and heaven upon a person which cannot merit you?

*Lady Happy:* Let me tell you, that riches ought to be bestowed on such as are poor, and want means to maintain themselves; and youth, on those that are old; beauty, on those that are ill-favored; and virtue, on those that are vicious. So that if I should place my gifts rightly, I must marry one that's poor, old, ill-favored, and debauched.

*Servant:* Heaven forbid.

*Lady Happy:* Nay, heaven doth not only allow of it, but commands it; for we are commanded to give to those that want.

*[Enter Madam Mediator]*

*Madam Mediator:* Surely, madam, you do but talk, and intend not to go where you say.

*Lady Happy:* Yes, truly, my words and intentions go even together.

*Madam Mediator:* But surely you will not encloister yourself, as you say.

*Lady Happy:* Why, what is there in the public world that should invite me to live in it?



*Madam Mediator:* More than if you should banish yourself from it.

*Lady Happy:* Put the case I should marry the best of men, if any best there be; yet would a married life have more crosses and sorrows than pleasure, freedom, or happiness? Nay, marriage to those that are virtuous is a greater restraint than a monastery. Or should I take delight in admirers? They might gaze on my beauty and praise my wit, and I receive nothing from their eyes nor lips; for words vanish as soon as spoken, and sights are not substantial. Besides, I should lose more of my reputation by their visits than gain by their praises. Or, should I quit reputation and turn courtesan, there would be more lost in my health than gained by my lovers; I should find more pain than pleasure. Besides, the troubles and frights I should be put to, with the quarrels and *brouilleries* that jealous rivals make, would be a torment to me; and 'tis only for the sake of men when women retire not. And since there is so much folly, vanity, and falsehood in men, why should women trouble and vex themselves for their sake? For retiredness bars the life from nothing else but men.

*Madam Mediator:* Oh yes, for those that encloister themselves bar themselves from all other worldly pleasures.

*Lady Happy:* The more fools they.

*Madam Mediator:* Will you call those fools that do it for the gods' sake?

*Lady Happy:* No, madam, it is not for the gods' sake, but for opinion's sake. For can any rational creature think or believe the gods take delight in the creature's uneasy life? Or did they command or give leave to nature to make senses for no use or to cross, vex, and pain them? For what profit or pleasure can it be to the gods to have men or women wear coarse linen or rough woollen, or to flay their skin with haircloth, or to eat or saw through their flesh with cords?

*Madam Mediator:* But when the mind is not employed with vanities nor the senses with luxury, the mind is more free to offer its adorations, prayers, and praises to the gods.

*Lady Happy:* I believe the gods are better pleased with praises than fasting, but when the senses are dulled with abstinency, the body weakened with fasting, the spirits tired with watching, the life made uneasy with pain, the soul can have but little will to worship. Only the imagination doth frighten it into active zeal, which devotion is rather forced than voluntary, so that their prayers rather flow out of their mouth than spring from their heart, like rainwater that runs through gutters, or like water that's forced up a hill by artificial pipes and cisterns. But those that pray not unto the gods or praise them more in prosperity than adversity, more in pleasures than pains, more in liberty than restraint, deserve neither the happiness of ease, peace, freedom, plenty, and tranquillity in this world, nor the glory and blessedness of the next.

*Madam Mediator:* In my opinion, your doctrine and your intention do not agree together.

*Lady Happy:* Why?

*Madam Mediator:* You intend to live encloistered and retired from the world.

*Lady Happy:* 'Tis true, but not from pleasures! For I intend to encloister myself from the world to enjoy pleasure, and not to bury myself from it; but to encloister myself from the encumbered cares and vexations, troubles, and perturbation of the world.

*Madam Mediator:* But if you encloister yourself, how will you enjoy the company of men, whose conversation is thought the greatest pleasure?

*Lady Happy:* Men are the only troublers of women, for they only cross and oppose their sweet delights and peaceable life; they cause



Incas bringing gold as a ransom for Atahualpa after his capture by the Spaniards, engraving from *Grand Voyages*, by Theodor de Bry, 1596.

their pains but not their pleasures. Wherefore those women that are poor, and have not means to buy delights and maintain pleasures, are fit only for men, for having not means to please themselves, they must serve only to please others. But those women where fortune, nature, and the gods are joined to make them happy were mad to live with men, who make the female sex their slaves. But I will not be so enslaved, but will live retired from their company. Wherefore, in order thereto, I will take so many noble persons of my own sex as my estate will plentifully maintain, such whose births are greater than their fortunes and are resolved to live a single life and vow virginity. With these I mean to live enclis-

tered with all the delights and pleasures that are allowable and lawful. My cloister shall not be a cloister of restraint but a place for freedom; not to vex the senses but to please them.

**Margaret Cavendish**, from *The Convent of Pleasure*. Cavendish was born in Essex to wealthy but untitled parents, and at the age of nineteen joined the court of Henrietta Maria. The following year, in 1644, Cavendish accompanied the queen into exile in Paris. There she met the royalist commander William Cavendish, whom she married in 1645; through him she met such intellectuals as Thomas Hobbes, Henry More, and René Descartes. Her discussions with these men formed the basis for her *Philosophical Letters*, in which she and a fictional interlocutor explore the philosophers' ideas.



## 1886: Russia

### EVERYTHING IS BETTER IN SIBERIA

Two peasant constables—one a stubby, black-bearded individual with such exceptionally short legs that if you looked at him from behind it seemed as though his legs began much lower down than on other people; the other, long, thin, and straight as a stick, with a scanty beard of dark-reddish color—were escorting to the district town a tramp who refused to remember his name. The first was called Andrey Ptaha, the second Nikandr Sapozhnikov.

The man they were escorting did not in the least correspond with the conception everyone has of a tramp. He was a frail little man, weak and sickly, with small, colorless, and extremely indefinite features. His eyebrows were scanty, his

*Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.*

—Viktor Frankl, 1946

expression mild and submissive; he had scarcely a trace of a mustache, though he was over thirty. He walked along timidly, bent forward, with his hands thrust into his sleeves. The collar of his shabby cloth overcoat, which did not look like a peasant's, was turned up to the very brim of his cap, so that only his little red nose ventured to peep out into the light of day. He spoke in an ingratiating tenor, continually coughing.

Andrey Ptaha was somewhat excited. He kept looking at the tramp and trying to understand how a live, sober man could fail to remember his name.

"You are an Orthodox Christian, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes," the tramp answered mildly.

"Hmm...then you've been christened?"

"Why, to be sure! I'm not a Turk. I go to church and to the sacrament, and do not eat meat when it is forbidden. And I observe my religious duties punctually..."

"Well, what are you called, then?"

"Who has any need to know my name?"

The tramp sighed, leaning his cheek on his fist. "If I were to tell them my real name and description, they would send me back to hard labor, I know."

"Why, have you been a convict?"

"I have, dear friend. For four years I went about with my head shaved and fetters on my legs."

"What for?"

"For murder, my good man! When I was still a boy of eighteen or so, my mama, a nurse, accidentally poured arsenic instead of soda and acid into my master's glass. There were boxes of all sorts in the storeroom, tons of them; it was easy to make a mistake."

"And why were you sentenced?"

"As an accomplice. I handed the glass to the master. That was always the custom. Mama prepared the soda and I handed it to him. Only I tell you all this as a Christian, brothers, as I would say it before God. Don't you tell anybody..."

"Oh, nobody's going to ask us," said Ptaha. "So you've run away from prison, have you?"

"I have, dear friend. Fourteen of us ran away. Some folks—God bless them—ran away and took me with them. Now, you tell me, on your conscience, good man, what reason have I to disclose my name? Let them send me to eastern Siberia," he said. "I am not afraid of that."

"Surely that's no better?"

"It is quite a different thing. In penal servitude you are like a crab in a basket: crowding, crushing, jostling, there's no room to breathe; it's downright hell—such hell, may the Queen of Heaven keep us from it! You are a robber and treated like a robber—worse than any dog. You can't sleep, you can't eat or even say your prayers. But it's not like that in a settlement. In a settlement I shall be a member of a commune like other people. The authorities are bound by law to give me my share...yes! They say the land costs nothing, no more than snow; you can take what you like. They will give





*The Liberation of Peter (detail), by Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1624.*

me farmland and room to build and garden...I shall plow my fields like other people, sow seed. I shall have cattle and stock of all sorts: bees, sheep, and dogs...a Siberian cat, so that rats and mice may not devour my goods. I will put up a house, I shall buy icons. Please God, I'll get married, I shall have children..."

The tramp muttered and looked, not at his listeners, but away into the distance. Naive as his dreams were, they were uttered in such a genuine and heartfelt tone that it was difficult

not to believe in them. The tramp's little mouth was screwed up in a smile. His eyes and little nose and his whole face were fixed and blank with blissful anticipation of happiness in the distant future. The constables listened and looked at him gravely, not without sympathy. They, too, believed in his dreams.

"I am not afraid of Siberia," the tramp went on muttering. "Siberia is just as much Russia and has the same God and tsar as here. They are just as Orthodox as you and I. Only

there is more freedom there and people are better off. Everything is better there. Take the rivers there, for instance; they are far better than those here. There's no end of fish, and all sorts of wild fowl. And my greatest pleasure, brothers, is fishing. Give me no bread to eat, but let me sit with a fishhook. Yes, indeed! I fish with a hook and with a wire line, and set creels, and when the ice comes I catch with a net. I am not strong enough to draw up the net, so I shall hire a man for five kopecks. And, Lord, what a pleasure it is. You catch an eelpout or a roach of some sort and are as pleased as if you had

met your own brother. And, would you believe it, there's a special art for every fish: you catch one with live bait, you catch another with a grub, the third with a frog or a grasshopper. One has to understand all that, of course. For example, take the eelpout. It is not a delicate fish—it will take a perch. And a pike loves a gudgeon. The *shilishper* likes a butterfly. If you fish for a roach in a rapid stream, there is no greater pleasure. You throw the line of seventy feet without lead, with a butterfly or a beetle, so that the bait floats on the surface; you stand in the water without your trousers and let it go

## 1967: Oakland, CA

### POWER IN NUMBERS

Rules should serve men, and not men serve rules. It is the duty of the poor to write and construct rules and laws that are in their better interests. This is one of the basic human rights of all men. If Black people go about their struggle for liberation in the way that the oppressor dictates and sponsors, then we will have degenerated to the level of groveling flunkies for the oppressor himself. When the oppressor makes a vicious attack against freedom fighters because of the way that such freedom fighters choose to go about their liberation, then we know we are moving in the direction of our liberation. The oppressor must be harassed until his doom. He must have no peace by day or by night. The slaves have always outnumbered the slave-masters. The power of the oppressor rests upon the submission of the people. When Black people really unite and rise up in all their splendid millions, they will have the strength to smash injustice. We do not understand the power in our numbers. Divided, confused, fighting among ourselves, we are still in the elementary stage of throwing rocks, sticks, empty wine bottles, and beer cans at racist cops who lie in wait for a chance to murder unarmed Black people.

Black people must now move, from the grass roots through the perfumed circles of the Black bourgeoisie, to seize by any means necessary a proportionate share of the power vested and collected in the structure of America. We must organize and unite to combat by long resistance the brutal force used against us daily. The power structure depends upon the use of force within retaliation. This is why

they have made it a felony to teach guerrilla warfare. An unarmed people are slaves or are subject to slavery at any given moment. If a government is not afraid of the people, it will arm the people from foreign aggression.

When a mechanic wants to fix a broken-down car engine, he must have the necessary tools to do the job. When the people move for liberation, they must have the basic tool of liberation: the gun. Only with the power of the gun can the Black masses halt the terror and brutality perpetuated against them by the armed racist power structure; and in one sense only by the power of the gun can the whole world be transformed into the earthly paradise dreamed of by the people from time immemorial. One successful practitioner of the art and science of national liberation and self-defense, Brother Mao Zedong, put it this way: "We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun."

**Huey P. Newton**, from "In Defense of Self-Defense." Newton's family left their sharecropper's plot in Louisiana for Oakland, where Newton attended high school and went to college. Newton founded the Black Panther Party with his classmate Bobby Seale. Under their leadership, the Panthers focused on surveilling police officers in Oakland and informing citizens of their rights during arrests. In 1968 Newton was convicted of the voluntary manslaughter of a police officer. "We've never advocated violence," Newton said after his conviction was overturned in court. "Violence is inflicted upon us."





Scene at the Signing of the Constitution, by Howard Chandler Christy, 1940.

with the current, and tug! The roach pulls at it! Only you have got to be artful that he doesn't carry off the bait, the damned rascal. As soon as he tugs at your line, you must whip it up; it's no good waiting. It's wonderful what a lot of fish I've caught in my time. When we were running away, the other convicts would sleep in the forest. I could not sleep, but I was off to the river. The rivers there are wide and rapid, the banks are steep—awfully. It's all slumbering forests on the bank. The trees are so tall that if you look to the top it makes you dizzy. Every pine would be worth ten rubles by the prices here."

In the overwhelming rush of artistic images of the past and sweet presentiments of happiness in the future, the poor wretch sank into silence, merely moving his lips as though whispering to himself. The vacant, blissful smile never left his lips. The constables were silent. They were pondering with bent heads. In the autumn stillness, when the cold, sullen mist that rises from the earth lies like a weight on the heart, when it stands like a prison wall before the eyes, and reminds man of the limitation of his freedom, it is sweet to think of the broad, rapid rivers, with steep banks wild and luxuriant, of the impenetrable forests, of the boundless steppes. Slowly and quietly the

imagination pictures how early in the morning, before the flush of dawn has left the sky, a man makes his way along the steep deserted bank like a tiny speck. The ancient, mastlike pines rise up in terraces on both sides of the torrent, gaze sternly at the free man and murmur menacingly; rocks, huge stones, and thorny bushes bar his way, but he is strong in body and bold in spirit, and has no fear of the pines, nor the stones, nor of his solitude, nor of the reverberating echo that repeats the sound of every footstep he takes. The peasants called up a picture of a free life such as they had never lived; whether they vaguely recalled the images of stories heard long ago or whether notions of a free life had been handed down to them with their flesh and blood from far-off ancestors, God knows.

**Anton Chekhov, from "Dreams."** When Chekhov was a teenager, his family moved to Moscow following the bankruptcy of his father, a grocer. Chekhov stayed behind in his hometown and worked as a tutor while finishing high school. After moving to Moscow, he studied medicine and helped support his family through humor writing, publishing his first story in 1880. In 1890 he took a three-month journey through Siberia to the penal colony on Sakhalin Island, financed by a series of newspaper dispatches from the trip; he later collected the reports and offered the proceeds to victims of the famine that struck Russia the following year.

## 1783: Boston

### EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, the petition of Belinda, an African, humbly shows:

That seventy years have rolled away since she on the banks of the Rio de Valta received her existence—the mountains covered with spicy forests, the valleys loaded with the richest fruits, spontaneously produced, joined to that happy temperature of air to exclude excess, would have yielded her the most complete felicity had not her mind received early

impressions of the cruelty of men, whose faces were like the moon, and whose bows and arrows were like the thunder and the lightning of the clouds. The idea of these, the most dreadful of all enemies, filled her infant slumbers with horror, and her noontide moments with evil apprehensions. But her affrighted imagination, in its most alarming extension, never represented distresses equal to what she hath since really experienced, for before she had twelve years enjoyed the fragrance of her native groves and ever she realized that Europeans placed their happiness in the yellow dust which she carelessly marked with her infant footsteps—even when she, in a sa-

*Moses and Pharaoh's Crown (detail), by Jan Steen, 1670.*





cred grove, with each hand in that of a tender parent, was paying her devotions to the great Orisa who made all things—an armed band of white men, driving many of her countrymen in chains, ran into the hallowed shade! Could the tears, the sighs, and the supplications bursting from tortured parental affection have blunted the keen edge of avarice, she might have been rescued from agony, which many of her country's children have felt but which none hath ever described. In vain she lifted her supplicating voice to an insulted father and her guiltless hands to a dishonored deity. She was ravished from the bosom of her country, from the arms of her friends—while the advanced age of her parents, rendering them unfit for servitude, cruelly separated her from them forever!

Scenes which her imagination had never conceived of—a floating world, the sporting monsters of the deep, and the familiar meetings of billows and clouds—strove, but in vain, to divert her melancholy attention from three hundred Africans in chains suffering the most excruciating torments, and some of them rejoicing that the pangs of death came like a balm to their wounds.

Once more her eyes were blessed with a continent—but alas, how unlike the land where she received her being! Here all things appeared unpropitious. She learned to catch the ideas marked by the sounds of language only to know that her doom was slavery, from which death alone was to emancipate her. What did it avail her that the walls of her Lord were hung with splendor, and that the dust trodden underfoot in her native country crowded his gates with sordid worshippers—the laws had rendered her incapable of receiving property—and though she was a free moral agent, accountable for her actions, she never had a moment at her own disposal.

Fifty years her faithful hands have been compelled to ignoble servitude for the benefit of an Isaac Royall until—as if nations must be agitated and the world convulsed for the preservation of that freedom which the Almighty

Father intended for all the human race—the present war was commenced. The terror of men armed in the cause of freedom compelled her master to fly—and to breathe away his life in a land where lawless domination sits enthroned, pouring bloody outrage and cruelty on all who dare to be free.

The face of your petitioner is now marked with the furrows of time, and her frame feebly bending under the oppression of years, while she, by the laws of the land, is denied the enjoyment of one morsel of that immense wealth, a part whereof hath been accumulated by her own industry and the whole augmented by her servitude.

*I had reasoned this out in my mind. There was one of two things I had a right to: liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive.*

—Harriet Tubman, 1869

Wherefore—casting herself at the feet of Your Honors as to a body of men formed for the extirpation of vassalage, for the reward of virtue, and the just return of honest industry—she prays that such allowance may be made her out of the estate of Colonel Royall as will prevent her and her more infirm daughter from misery in the greatest extreme, and scatter comfort over the short and downward path of their lives—and she will ever pray.

**Belinda**, from a petition to the Massachusetts General Court. Belinda was enslaved by the Royall family for fifty years. In 1778, after fleeing America for England when the revolution broke out, the Loyalist Isaac Royall Jr. made a will instructing that Belinda be paid thirty pounds a year for three years, so that "she shall not be a charge to the town of Medford." Royall died in 1781, and Belinda presented this petition to the General Court in order to secure a pension from the proceeds of his estate. The court granted her an annual pension of fifteen pounds and twelve shillings; records suggest she received payment only twice.





# FREE SPIRIT

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## 2022: New York City

ANDREY KURKOV PICKS UP HIS PEN

When I think about the current situation in Ukraine and about what I must say today, I get the impression that I should be giving not the Arthur Miller Lecture but the George Orwell Lecture. Russian aggression has stretched its steel grip out to us as if from the distant Soviet past, from the twentieth century, from a country in which there is a Ministry of Truth and a Ministry of Happiness, from a country where the massacre of civilians and the destruction of cities is accompanied by the music of Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky, from a country where even monuments to Pushkin are dressed in military uniforms and forced to take part in the fight against Ukraine and against Ukrainian identity and culture.

On the first of May, I sat in my car at the Ukrainian-Slovak border for five hours in order to leave war-torn Ukraine in order to get to Denmark and from Denmark to get here, to New York, for this meeting. The distance you have to cover does not become longer when the flat race-course is converted into a steeplechase course. The distance is simply filled with new meaning

and it requires new strength and new understanding from those who want to overcome this distance. The same thing happens with any tasks: war changes the rules for solving them but does not make the desired result impossible.

Today the task for Ukraine is to defend its independence, defend its freedom, and complete the reforms that should have been fully implemented long ago. To forge any change, you need to know the truth of the situation. For any decision-making, in war or in peacetime, without an understanding of the true state of affairs it is impossible to achieve a result. You cannot even choose the right route to the goal.

I have always tried to avoid pathos, and if I cannot avoid it now, please forgive me. Pretentious words like *truth*, *justice*, and *motherland* used to set my teeth on edge. I could not but doubt the sincerity of the speaker if, of course, I were not utterly convinced of their insincerity. Now I catch myself thinking pretentious thoughts. I try to muffle them. I try to think about what is happening calmly and coolly. But, to be honest, I don't always succeed.

## 1576: Aquitaine

### UNBRIDLED LICENSE

Our mind is an erratic, dangerous, and heedless tool; it is hard to impose order and moderation upon it. And in my time those who have some rare excellence beyond the others, and some extraordinary quickness, are nearly all, we see, incontinent in the license of their opinions and conduct. It is a miracle if you find a sedate and sociable one.

People are right to give the tightest possible barriers to the human mind. In study, as in everything else, its steps must be counted and regulated for it; the limits of the chase must be artificially determined for it. They bridle and bind it with religions, laws, customs, science, precepts, mortal and immortal punishments and rewards, and still we see that by its whirling and its incohesiveness it escapes all these bonds. It is an empty body, with nothing by which it can be seized and directed; a varying and formless body, which can be neither tied nor grafted.

Indeed there are few souls so orderly, so strong and wellborn, that they can be trusted with their own guidance, and that can sail with moderation and without temerity, in the freedom of their judgments, beyond the common opinions. It is more expedient to place them in tutelage.

The mind is a dangerous blade, even to its possessor, for anyone who does not know how to wield it with order and discretion. And there is no animal that must more rightly be given blinkers to hold its gaze, in subjection and constraint, in front of its feet, and to keep it from straying here or there outside the ruts that custom and the laws trace for it. Wherefore it will become you better to confine yourself to the accustomed routine, whatever it is, than to fly headlong into this unbridled license.

**Michel de Montaigne**, from *"Apology for Raymond Sebond."* In 1569 Montaigne published a translation of Sebond's *Natural Theology* that he had undertaken at the suggestion of his father, who died before it was completed; Montaigne later revisited Sebond's work in this essay exploring his interest in philosophical skepticism. In 1571, after selling his seat in the Bordeaux Parliament, Montaigne retired to his father's castle and began working on his *Essays*. Much of the book was dictated. "The specimens we have of his own writing," one biographer writes, "show that he generally spelt like an ignorant soldier."

When the new, bloodier phase of Russian aggression began on February 24 of this year, when the shock of the first days of the new war had passed, I found myself wanting to look back and say thank you to everyone who had been with me in my pre-February 24 life and who had helped me make my life interesting, useful, fulfilling, and meaningful. The first name that came to my mind was the name of my country, my Ukraine.

Ukraine is a country of individualists. Every Ukrainian has his own personal Ukraine. Every Ukrainian appreciates something special about his homeland, something that is important for her or him. It might be the country's amazing and diverse nature, it might be the fertile black soil that produces 10 percent of the world's wheat. For me, Ukraine is, first of all, the space of my personal freedom. This is a country that since 1991 has given me more than thirty years of life and work without censorship, without political control, without pressure. Even today, during the Russian aggression, during attacks that every day take the lives of Ukrainian citizens—military and civilian—the government of Ukraine has not introduced real military censorship and has not told citizens what to say or what to think. Yes, of course, information about what is happening on the fronts of the war is not freely dispersed. We have had to learn new rules of behavior regarding information. But even in wartime, the Ukrainian state has remained essentially democratic, trying not to restrict the freedoms of citizens, including the freedom of speech.

When you live in a free country and are a free citizen, freedom seems to be something natural, something that no one can take away from you. But even with the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution of Ukraine, in our country there has always been a struggle between those who wanted to tell the truth and those who wanted to make it inaccessible. It was not politicians who took part in this struggle but journalists. The number of casualties among representatives of honest journalism testify to the cruelty of this struggle. Over the years of independence, about



one hundred journalists have died in Ukraine; in the past two months, more than twenty of them have been killed by the Russian military. Journalism remains one of the most dangerous professions, and during war it becomes even more dangerous. The inscription **PRESS** on a bullet-proof vest or helmet is to the Russian military like a red rag to a bull.

The level of journalism traditionally shows the level of democracy in society. We can see how independent journalism is being destroyed by the example of annexed Crimea. Immediately after the annexation, some journalists remained working there, including freelancers for Radio Liberty. One by one, they were deported from the peninsula or arrested. Citizen journalists stepped in to replace them—courageous people who understood the necessity of objective information about what was happening. Today there are fourteen Ukrainian citizen journalists in prisons in Crimea and Russia, against whom criminal cases have been fabricated. They are accused of terrorism or religious extremism, although their only fault is that they voluntarily

assumed the responsibility to cover the repression of the Russian authorities against dissidents, against those who do not recognize the annexation of Crimea, against those who do not agree with Putin's policies. I want to remember by name these courageous people who have already been sentenced to long prison terms or are awaiting their sentence. They are Vladislav Esipenko, Marlen Asanov, Osman Arifmemetov, Remzi Bekirov, Ruslan Suleimanov, Rustem Sheykhaliev, Server Mustafayev, Seyran Saliev, Timur Ibragimov, Amet Suleymanov, Alexei Bessarabov, Irina Danilovich, and former journalist, politician, and deputy chairman of the Crimean Mejlis Nariman Dzhelal. In addition to them, more than two hundred Ukrainian citizens are in Russian prisons and in the prisons of the annexed Crimea on fictitious charges.

For a writer and for a journalist, there is no more important freedom than the freedom to write. And if a journalist or writer continues to write, realizing that he can be repressed for this, this only speaks of the courage and dedication of such a person.

Noah releasing a dove from the ark, detail of a mosaic from San Marco Basilica, Venice, thirteenth century.





Martin Luther King Jr. delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC, 1963.

My family's world changed on February 24. The whole world changed on February 24, when the aging and ailing President Putin gave the order to launch a crusade against Ukraine, against the collective West, against democracy, and against Western civilization.

Putin left Ukraine no choice but to fight for its independence to the end—to the bitter end. He left no choice to the civilized world. The world should help Ukraine, and the world does help Ukraine defend its freedom—defend all the freedoms of its citizens.

Now, as I speak to you, the Russian occupation forces in the Kherson region in southern Ukraine, near the Black Sea, are trying to switch the Ukrainian internet to a Russian service and are warning residents in the occupied territories that soon they will not have access to Facebook or Instagram. In this way the invaders warn Ukrainians that they are about to become "Russians" and that they must accept this as something that cannot be changed. They must give up their freedoms and rights, as tens of millions of Russians have done. I know how the people who remained under occupation feel; I know what

they are thinking now, and my thoughts are with them. Several times I have spoken via messengers with colleagues who found themselves in the occupied zone. I have lost touch with some of them. But I know that they will not accept the rules of slavery that Russia is trying to impose on Ukrainians who find themselves in the territories occupied by the Russian army.

Ukrainian writers, regardless of the language they write in, will never give up the freedom to write what they think and what they consider important.

Ukrainians, writers or not writers, cannot and will not learn to live without freedom.

*From a speech delivered at the PEN World Voices Festival. The son of a doctor and a pilot, Kurkov trained as a Japanese translator and began writing novels while serving as a prison guard in Odesa. His novel Grey Bees, which he wrote after meeting refugees in Kyiv who made regular trips to the Donbas to deliver medicine, depicts the 2014 war through the perspective of a beekeeper. "For Ukrainians, freedom is more important than stability," Kurkov said in a March 2022 interview. "For Russians, it is the opposite. Ukrainians change their presidents at each election, Russians keep their tsar until the tsar is dead."*



## 1963: Accra

### ENEMY OF THE STATE

Ghana was the cynosure of all eyes, friendly and unfriendly. The world's press was represented in our capital, and what they missed the opposition filled in for them with their own explanations. No occasion, no event, was too small to exploit in order to discredit both Ghana and the government before the world and reduce the high prestige which our struggle and attainment of freedom had won for Ghana. Not often, surely, has an opposition been so active in sacrificing the interests of its country to serve its own ends in disrupting the essential national unity.

I saw the state being undermined, its independence in danger of destruction, all in the name of democracy and freedom of expression. Our opposition used the press as a forum in a way that it had not been used in Europe, to vilify and attack us as a means of destroying our young state. To have served writs upon them for libel would have kept us busy in the courts to the exclusion of our proper duties. Though under extreme pressure from my party, I was still hesitant to take action. Having placed our faith in the working of a liberal democracy, I ardently desired to give it every chance, even at the risk of some abuse to which I knew it was open, especially in the absence of a legal code such as operated in the United Kingdom but had not been applied to the archaic laws of the Gold Coast. We were finding that an administrative and legal pattern under which a colonial regime could contrive to maintain itself required constant piecemeal adaptation to deal with the very different problems of our need to bring order and unity within a democratic framework and to establish a firm base for our national development.

Our toleration of the disruptive excesses of the opposition was accepted not as an expression of good faith in the democratic process but as a mark of weakness, and stimulated them to ever bolder action. The disinclination to take salutary measures was also being misunderstood abroad, where it was being regarded as a trial of strength

between us, the lawfully constituted government, and the subversive nongovernmental elements. We watched the antics of the foreign press with misgiving. It seemed as though our overseas critics were intent upon destroying us before we ever got started. Nothing was too small to be twisted as evidence in misrepresenting the strength and quality of my government or to support the fiction of the growing strength of the opposition.

In times of national emergency, the Western democracies have been compelled to limit their citizens' freedom. We were facing a time of national emergency. We were engaged in a kind of war, a war against poverty and disease, against ignorance, against tribalism and disunity. We were fighting to construct, not to destroy. We needed to secure the conditions which would allow us to pursue our policy of reconstruction and development.

*Despotism subjects a nation to one tyrant—  
democracy to many.*

—Marguerite Gardiner, 1839

For two and a half years of difficult state building, my government took no action to limit the freedom of the press. The opposition was quick to exploit this freedom and soon debased it into license. Each day, its newspapers came out with screaming headlines about the perfidy of the government. They heaped abuse and libel upon my colleagues and me. They wrote and preached, they called press conferences with local and foreign correspondents, they addressed public meetings all over the country, stigmatizing the government and singling out me and my immediate associates for special attack, abuse, and ridicule.

During the struggle for independence, we emphasized the need for national unity for the attainment of freedom and the enormous responsibilities of statehood that would follow. These call for a supreme effort on the part of every citizen. How could our people pull their weight with zeal and dedication when it was ceaselessly drummed into them that their government was



Roman wall painting of a harbor scene, Pompeii, first century.

unscrupulous, inept, and corrupt; that their leaders were venal and power-thirsty; and that the national effort was invoked not for the greater glory of Ghana but for the personal glory of Kwame Nkrumah? This was not freedom of expression. This was irresponsible license, and if allowed to continue unbridled, it could have undermined our state, our independence, and the people's faith in themselves and their capacities.

This was the internal picture. The impact on the movements for liberation in the rest of Africa could be just as unfortunate. It was likely to cause despondency in their ranks and friction between us and their leaders, who might have no means of recognizing the falsity of opposition attacks upon us. The colonial powers would also not be unmindful of these happenings and possibly use them as a pretext for delaying their departure by citing the magnified political "battle" in Ghana as a frightening example of premature independence.

We came to the point where it was obvious that the government must take action if we were to avert the dangers inherent in a false situation. The imposition of any form of press censorship was an idea most repugnant to me, since it ran counter to everything I had always believed in, everything for which I had struggled in my life. Freedom of expression had been one of the essential rights for which I had fought. I had gone to prison for daring to say things the colonial administration had not liked.

Our fight had been the fight for the freedom of our people and the native inhabitants of the land, against an alien regime that denied freedom. Now that we had won our emancipation and launched our national existence, were we to allow our independence to be endangered by the very people whose speech and action had abetted the colonial regime? We had embarked upon a course that aimed to push forward the clock of progress. Were others to be given the freedom to push it back? We had to face up squarely to the question of whether a less developed seedling state, eager to modernize itself in the interests of the community, threatened by the unpatriotic deeds of a minority opposition, could permit itself all the forms which established democracies had taken generations to evolve. A young state has to work doubly hard, has to deny itself many of the trimmings that have become the accepted norm in the older nations.

**Kwame Nkrumah**, *from Africa Must Unite*. Born in a Gold Coast village in 1909, Nkrumah became active in Pan-African organizations while studying in the United States. In 1950 he was imprisoned for his involvement in Ghana's independence movement; he later became the first leader of independent Ghana. In 1957 Nkrumah invited Martin Luther King Jr. to witness the lowering of the Commonwealth flag and the raising of the Ghanaian one. "I was crying for joy," King later said, remembering "little children six years old and old people eighty and ninety years old walking the streets of Accra crying: 'Freedom! Freedom!'"



## C. 1884: Hartford, CT

### SWEET-SMELLING LIES

There are certain sweet-smelling, sugarcoated lies current in the world which all politic men have apparently tacitly conspired together to support and perpetuate. One of these is that there is such a thing in the world as independence: independence of thought, independence of opinion, independence of action. Another is that the world loves to *see* independence—admires it, applauds it. Another is that there is such a thing in the world as toleration—in religion, in politics, and such matters; and with it trains that already mentioned auxiliary lie that toleration is admired and applauded. Out of these trunk lies spring many branch ones: to wit, the lie that not all men are slaves; the lie that men are glad when other men succeed; glad when they prosper; glad to see them reach lofty heights; sorry to see them fall again. And yet other branch lies: to wit, that there is heroism in man; that he is not mainly made up of malice and treachery; that he is sometimes not a coward; that there is something about him that ought to be perpetuated—in heaven, or hell, or somewhere. And these other branch lies, to wit: that conscience, man's moral medicine chest, is not only created by the Creator but is put into man ready charged with the right and only true and authentic correctives of conduct—and the duplicate chest, with the self-same correctives, unchanged, unmodified, distributed to all nations and all epochs. And yet one other branch lie: to wit, that I am I, and you are you; that we are units, individuals, and have natures of our own, instead of being the tail end of a tapeworm eternity of ancestors extending in linked procession back and back and back to our source in the monkeys, with this so-called individuality of ours a decayed and rancid mush of inherited instincts and teachings derived, atom by atom, stench by stench, from the entire line of that sorry column, and not so much new and original matter in it as you could balance on a needle point and examine under a microscope. This makes well-nigh fantastic the suggestion

that there can be such a thing as a personal, original, and responsible nature in a man separable from that in him which is not original, and findable in such quantity as to enable the observer to say, This is a man, not a procession.

Consider the first-mentioned lie: that there is such a thing in the world as independence; that it exists in individuals; that it exists in bodies of men. Surely if anything *is* proven, by whole oceans and continents of evidence, it is that the quality of independence was almost wholly left out of the human race. The scattering exceptions to the rule only emphasize it, light it up, make it glare. We are discreet sheep; we wait to see how the drove is going, and then go with the drove.

*Freedom of the press is only guaranteed to those who own one.*

—A.J. Liebling, 1960

We have two opinions: one private, which we are afraid to express; and another one—the one we use—which we force ourselves to wear to please Mrs. Grundy, until habit makes us comfortable in it, and the custom of defending it presently makes us love it, adore it, and forget how pitifully we came by it. Look at it in politics. Look at the candidates whom we loathe one year and are afraid to vote against the next; whom we cover with unimaginable filth one year and fall down on the public platform and worship the next—and keep on doing it until the habitual shutting of our eyes to last year's evidence brings us presently to a sincere and stupid belief in this year's. Look at the tyranny of party—at what is called party allegiance, party loyalty—a snare invented by designing men for selfish purposes—and which turns voters into chattels, slaves, rabbits, and all the while their masters and they themselves are shouting rubbish about liberty, independence, freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, honestly unconscious of the fantastic contradiction; and forgetting or ignoring that their fathers and the churches shouted the same blasphemies a generation earlier when they were closing their doors against the hunted slave,

beating his handful of humane defenders with Bible texts and billies, and pocketing the insults and licking the shoes of his Southern master.

If we would learn what the human race really *is* at bottom, we need only observe it in election times. A Hartford clergyman met me in the street and spoke of a new nominee—denounced the nomination, in strong, earnest words—words that were refreshing for their independence, their manliness. He said, “I ought to be proud, perhaps, for this nominee is a relative of mine. On the contrary, I am humiliated and disgusted, for I know him intimately—familiarily—and I know that he is an unscrupulous scoundrel, and always has been.” You should have seen this clergyman preside at a political meeting forty days later, and urge, and plead, and gush—and you should have heard him paint the character of this same nominee. You would have supposed he was describing the Cid, and Greatheart, and Sir Galahad, and Bayard the Spotless all

rolled into one. Was he sincere? Yes—by that time; and therein lies the pathos of it all, the hopelessness of it all. It shows at what trivial cost of effort a man can teach himself to lie, and learn to believe it, when he perceives, by the general drift, that that is the popular thing to do. Does he believe his lie *yet*? Oh, probably not; he has no further use for it. It was but a passing incident; he spared to it the moment that was its due, then hastened back to the serious business of his life.

**Mark Twain**, from *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*. Born Samuel Clemens, Twain trained as a pilot on the Mississippi River in 1857 at the age of twenty-one. His steamboat career ended four years later with the outbreak of the Civil War. Twain took his pen name from the riverboat expression for a depth of twelve feet, using the name for the first time in 1863 while working as a reporter in Nevada. His notes for this book came from interviews with a biographer, who described spending mornings in Twain's bedroom, where Twain gave dictation “clad in a handsome dressing gown, propped against great snowy pillows.”

Soviet Jewish refugees arriving at the Südbahnhof, Vienna, 1978. Photograph by Nathan Benn.





## 1991: Enugu

### SHOW ME THE MONEY

When she received her first salary as a married woman, her husband had demanded all of it. Basking in the euphoria of the newly married, she had failed to notice the implications and consequences of such a demand and had gladly complied with it. From her salary, Bertrand had given her some housekeeping money and a small amount of pocket money.

By the end of the second month after her marriage she had begun to question the wisdom and propriety of handing over her entire salary to her husband to manage.

When her husband demanded the third month's salary she had quietly refused to surrender it. She was then six weeks pregnant and had decided to begin buying the layette bit by bit.

"I must have the money," her husband had repeated, his lower lip sticking out as it always did whenever he was frustrated or angry.

"I don't think it's proper for me to hand over my entire salary to you every month," Iba had said in a conversational tone. "I have every right to spend my salary the way I want to."

Bertrand had become angrier. "I see you're now getting ideas into your head. Some women in that bloody school of yours are teaching you how to grow wings, but I'll clip your wings before they ever start growing."

"I've not discussed the matter with anyone," Iba had said. "Not even with my mother."

"I want the money this minute, before I lose my temper, Iba."

When she would not comply, he had begun to beat her. She had tried to fight back, but he was much too strong for her. He was nearly six feet tall and weighed eighty kilograms, while she was only five feet four inches and fifty-five kilograms. Unable to take any more, she surrounded the money to him.

When she arrived at the headmistress' office, Iba was thinking about the subsequent beatings she had received from Bertrand at the end of each month as she tried to assert her

individuality. The headmistress was not in the office; the small room could only accommodate half of the forty teachers in the school while the other half loitered in the long corridor that spanned the whole top floor. They were chatting in groups, their faces radiant with the expectation of receiving some well-earned money.

As Iba watched her colleagues—they were all female—she wondered how many of them handed over their salaries to their husbands to spend as they liked. She had done a little investigation into what working married women did with their pay packets, and what she had learned from the few who were ready to discuss the matter freely was shocking.

*If the bird does like its cage, and does like its sugar, and will not leave it, why keep the door so very carefully shut?*

—Olive Schreiner, 1883

First, she had asked Phoebe, a classmate at the teachers' training college. Standing there in the corridor, she could hear Phoebe's lamentation:

"My husband insists that I use my salary to feed the family. That leaves me with nothing for myself. My husband argues that he is responsible for the rent, for maintaining the family car, and for paying the children's school fees. But all these put together are still less than what I spend feeding the family. And my husband is always asking for expensive meals. Men are terrible. Either way, they cheat you. My husband gets tax rebates for having me and the kids. He gets rent subsidy, but I don't. Is all this fair?"

Uzo, another of Iba's friends, had a different story to tell. Her parents had decreed that her salary for three years from the day of her wedding must be sent to them whole as part of her bride price. Her husband, who was forced to accept this arrangement in spite of the high price he had already paid, took it out on her.

Ukachi, of all Iba's friends, had the saddest story to tell. She taught in the same school as her husband, who was the headmaster. Ukachi had bemoaned her fate to Iba:



*Bolívar and Santander with the Libertador Army After the Victory of Boyacá*, by Francisco de Paula Álvarez Vargas, c. 1910.

"The worst thing about my case is that I don't even touch my salary. My husband makes me sign the voucher, while he spends the money as he likes. I am sure he keeps mistresses and perhaps spends some of my money on them. Twice I refused to sign the voucher if I wasn't going to collect the money, but on each occasion he made life so miserable for me that I've decided to forget that I earn a salary. I have to accept that I'm like his housemaid who receives an allowance at the end of every month. That's the only way there'll be peace between us."

After a long wait, Iba signed the voucher and received her salary. Leaving the school compound, she took a taxi to the main market. There she spent one third of her salary on food-stuffs, the second third on herself, and some of the rest on baby things. She bought herself two maternity dresses, some underwear, a pair

of shoes and a handbag to match, and a long-sleeved shirt for her husband. The assertion of her individuality by going on a spending spree made her feel on top of the world, but underneath the elation was fear of the consequences when she got home. She felt like one condemned to death but allowed to satisfy some of her desires before meeting her fate.

**Ifeoma Okoye**, from *"The Pay-Packet."* Okoye earned her teaching certificate in 1959 and later opened a nursery school. When she saw how few books addressed the experiences of young people, she began writing children's literature, publishing four novels between 1980 and 1981. In 1982 she published her first novel for adults, *Behind the Clouds*, which won a prize from the Nigerian National Council for Arts and Culture the following year. "Even though every novel ends with a full stop, the story it tells often continues," she said in 2018. "The story shows a greater, more insidious authority and capacity."



## 1842: Marquesas Islands

### CIVILIZED CRIMES

I once heard it given as an instance of the frightful depravity of a certain tribe in the Pacific that they had no word in their language to express the idea of virtue. The assertion was unfounded; but were it otherwise, it might be met by stating that their language is almost entirely destitute of terms to express the delightful ideas conveyed by our endless catalogue of civilized crimes.

In the altered frame of mind to which I have referred, every object that presented itself to my notice in the valley struck me in a new light, and the opportunities I now enjoyed of observing the manners of its inmates tended to strengthen my favorable impressions. One peculiarity that fixed my admiration was the perpetual hilarity reigning through the whole extent of the vale.

There seemed to be no cares, griefs, troubles, or vexations in all Typee. The hours tripped along as gaily as the laughing couples down a country dance.

There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honor in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault-and-battery attorneys to foment discord, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations, everlastingly occupying the spare bedchamber, and diminishing the elbow room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtors' prisons; no proud and hard-hearted nabobs in Typee; or to sum up all in one word—no money! That “root of all evil” was not to be found in the valley.

In this secluded abode of happiness there were no cross old women, no cruel stepdames, no withered spinsters, no lovesick maidens, no sour old bachelors, no inattentive husbands, no melancholy young men, no blubbering youngsters,

and no squalling brats. All was mirth, fun, and high good humor. Blue devils, hypochondria, and doleful dumps went and hid themselves among the nooks and crannies of the rocks.

You would see a parcel of children frolicking together the livelong day, and no quarreling, no contention among them. The same number in our own land could not have played together for the space of an hour without biting or scratching one another. There you might have seen a throng of young females, not filled with envyings of each other's charms, nor displaying the ridiculous affectations of gentility, nor yet moving in whalebone corsets like so many automatons, but free, inartificially happy, and unconstrained.

There were some spots in that sunny vale where they would frequently resort to decorate themselves with garlands of flowers. To have seen them reclining beneath the shadows of one of the beautiful groves, the ground about them strewn with freshly gathered buds and blossoms, employed in weaving chaplets and necklaces, one would have thought that all the train of Flora had gathered together to keep a festival in honor of their mistress.

With the young men there seemed almost always some matter of diversion or business on hand that afforded a constant variety of enjoyment. But whether fishing, or carving canoes, or polishing their ornaments, never was there exhibited the least sign of strife or contention.

The old men, of whom there were many in the vale, seldom stirred from their mats, where they would recline for hours and hours, smoking and talking to one another with all the garrulity of age.

**Herman Melville**, from Typee. Melville's father was an importer who went bankrupt in 1830, when Melville was eleven, forcing the family to move from New York City to Albany. The young Melville worked as a clerk, farmer, teacher, and bookkeeper before joining the crew of the whaling ship *Acushnet*; he later referred to the ship as “my Yale College and my Harvard.” He abandoned ship while in the Marquesas Islands, spending a month on Nuku Hiva before returning to Tahiti on an Australian whaler. Typee, the account he wrote of these adventures, was published in 1846 to instant commercial success.

## 1922: Madras

### SELF-CONTROL

Every nation like every individual is born free. Absolute freedom is the birthright of every people. The only limitations are those which a people may place over themselves. The British connection is invaluable as long as it is a defense against any worse connection sought to be imposed by violence. But it is only a means to an end, not a mandate of providence or nature. The alliance of neighbors, born of suffering for one another's sake, for ends that purify those who suffer, is

*Pushing someone toward liberty does not set her free; taking the chains off a prisoner does not give him freedom.*

—Ken Bugul, 1982

necessarily a more natural and more enduring bond than one that has resulted from pure greed on the one side and weakness on the other. Where such a natural and enduring alliance has been accomplished among Asiatic peoples and not only between the respective governments, it may truly be felt to be more valuable than the British connection itself, after that connection has denied freedom or equality, and even justice.

Is violence or total surrender the only choice open to any people to whom freedom or justice is denied? Violence at a time when the whole world has learned from bitter experience the futility of violence is unworthy of a country whose ancient people's privilege it was to see this truth long ago.

Violence may rid a nation of its foreign masters but will only enslave it from inside. No nation can really be free which is at the mercy of its army and its military heroes. If a people rely for freedom on soldiers, the soldiers will rule the country, not the people. Till the recent awakening of the workers of Europe, this was the only freedom which the powers of Europe really enjoyed. True freedom can exist only when those who produce, not those who destroy or know how to live only on another's labor, are the masters.

Even were violence the true road to freedom, is violence possible to a nation which has been emasculated and deprived of all weapons, and the whole world is hopelessly beyond all our possibilities in the manufacture and the wielding of weapons of destruction?

Submission or withdrawal of cooperation is the real and only alternative before India. Submission to injustice puts on the tempting garb of peace and gradual progress, but there is no surer way to death than submission to wrong.

Freedom is a priceless thing. But it is a stable possession only when it is acquired by a nation's strenuous effort. What is got by chance or outward circumstance, or given by the generous impulse of a tyrant prince or people, is not a reality. A nation will truly enjoy freedom only when, in the process of winning or defending its freedom, it has been purified and consolidated through and through, until liberty has become a part of its very soul. Otherwise it would be but a change of the form of government, which might please the fancy of politicians, or satisfy the classes in power, but could never emancipate a people. An act of Parliament can never create citizens in Hindustan. The strength, spirit, and happiness of a people who have fought and won their liberty cannot be got by reform acts. Effort and sacrifice are the necessary conditions of real, stable emancipation. Liberty unacquired, merely found, will on the test fail like the Dead Sea apple or the magician's plenty.

The war that the people of India have declared and which will purify and consolidate India, and forge for her a true and stable liberty, is a war with the latest and most effective weapon. In this war, what has hitherto been in the world an undesirable but necessary incident in freedom's battles—the killing of innocent men—has been eliminated, and that which is the true essential for forging liberty—the self-purification and self-strengthening of men and women—has been kept pure and unalloyed. It is for men, women, and youth—every one of them who lives in and loves India—to do his bit in this battle, not waiting for others, not calculat-





*Joan of Arc Announcing the Liberation of Orléans to Charles VII at Loches, France, fifteenth century.*

ing the chances of his surviving the battle to enjoy the fruits of his sacrifice. Soldiers in the old-world wars did not insure their lives before going to the front. The special privilege of youth is to exercise their comparative freedom for country's sake and give up the yearning for lives and careers built on the slavery of the people.

That on which a foreign government truly rests, whatever may be the illusions on their or our part, is not the strength of its armed forces but our own cooperation. Actual service on the part of one generation and educational preparation for future service on the part of the next generation are the two main branches of this cooperation of slaves in the perpetuation of slavery. The boycott of government service and the courts is aimed at the first; the

boycott of government-controlled schools is to stop the second. If either the one or the other of these two branches of cooperation is withdrawn in sufficient measure, there will be an automatic and perfectly peaceful change from slavery to liberty.

**Chakravarti Rajagopalachari**, from his introduction to *Mahatma Gandhi's Freedom's Battle*. *Rajagopalachari joined Gandhi's movement in 1919 and in 1948 became the only Indian to serve as governor-general; the position was abolished at the end of his term. At odds with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru over his support for free enterprise, Rajagopalachari left the Congress Party in 1959, five years after he had supported censoring a satirical performance of the Ramayana that many Hindus found offensive, insisting that "the government is the lawful guardian in the matter of safeguarding the sentiments of the people."*

## Four Freedoms

In his 1941 annual message to Congress, Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke of a future founded on “four essential human freedoms”: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. A year later, after the United States entered World War II, artist Norman Rockwell began to translate the Four Freedoms into “simple, everyday scenes” for *The Saturday Evening Post*, which published them in February and March 1943. Sales of posters of the paintings raised \$132 million in war bonds.

### FREEDOM OF SPEECH

(1) Rockwell often said that the inspiration for the series was a town meeting in Arlington, Vermont, where he had witnessed a resident protesting a popular plan to build a new school.

(2) Rockwell biographer Deborah Solomon found this scene unconvincing: in addition to the “near absence of women,” she notes, “it seems unlikely that the established banker types would be trying to glean wisdom from an ordinary worker.”

(3) When the painting appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* in February 1943, it was accompanied by a short story by Booth Tarkington in which the young Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini meet in 1912 and discuss how dictators must destroy freedom of speech.

### FREEDOM FROM FEAR

(1) Rockwell received more than sixty thousand letters about the *Four Freedoms* series. One, from the Pioneer Suspender Company, noted that “the father in *Freedom from*

*Fear* was wearing a pair of suspenders from Pioneer. He had damn good reason to be free from fear...as long as his pants were being held up by Pioneer.”

(2) “I really believed that the war against Hitler would bring the Four Freedoms to everyone,” Rockwell said in 1976, “but I couldn’t paint that today. I just don’t believe in it. I was doing this best-possible-world, Santa-down-the-chimney, lovely-kids-adoring-their-kindly-grandpa sort of thing. And I liked it, but now I’m sick of it.”

### FREEDOM FROM WANT

(1) “*Freedom from Want* was not very popular overseas,” Rockwell recalled in his 1960 memoir. “The Europeans sort of resented it because it wasn’t freedom from want, it was overabundance, the table was so loaded down with food.”

(2) *The Saturday Evening Post* asked the Filipino American novelist and poet Carlos Bulosan to write a text to accompany this painting. He described “forces which have been trying to falsify American history” and “drive many Americans to a corner of compromise with those who would distort the ideals of men that died for freedom.”

(3) Rockwell later said he never liked this painting or *Freedom from Fear* because the two had no “wallop.”



### FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

(1) Rockwell grew so frustrated with his first version of the painting, which depicted men of various faiths “laughing and getting on well together” in a barbershop, that he scrapped it and started over.

(2) Rose Hoyt, the model for the woman holding rosary beads, was an Episcopalian. Rockwell asked her, “Would you be a Catholic for today?”

(3) In 2018 a group of photographers exhibited updated versions of Rockwell’s *Four Freedoms*, with a cast of models more diverse than Rockwell’s neighbors. “America didn’t look like that then,” artist Hank Willis Thomas said in an interview. “It definitely doesn’t look like that now.”



## 1982: New York City

### FREE MARKET

We have no idea what “freedom” is, or why we, as human beings, seem to fear it so. We understand it best by its absence, just as the defeated creature in a poem of Emily Dickinson’s lies on the devastated battlefield and, hearing the distant celebration of trumpets in the enemy’s camp, comprehends far more deeply than does the victor just what triumph really is. Being, so far, creatures ourselves of lack and longing, humans seem to have perfected those skills that permit us to mourn, to yearn—and to deny the condition of not having something we never have had.

We really have no idea what “woman” is, or why we, as women and men, seem to acknowledge the concept. Like freedom, we understand it best by its absence, its lack, its negative: “woman” is non-man. Aristotle was neither the first voice nor the last to define women as “misbegotten males.” To be consistent with our character as creatures of longing, we have (rather prematurely) defined man as human. To be consistent with our character as creatures of denial, we then are forced to define woman as nonhuman.

Is it coincidental that we have no idea what freedom is, or what woman is—while we feel we have an idea of what bondage is, of what man is? Is it possible that our very ignorance of what woman is constitutes the very thing that stands in the way of knowing what freedom is?

We know what we are *told* freedom is (and our capacity for hope often has made us trust the tale and not the teller). We are, for example, told that we already possess it. In the “developed nations,” corporate capitalism congratulates its subjects on their freedom of expression while robbing them of economic freedom; in the “communist world,” state capitalism congratulates its subjects on their economic freedom while denying them the liberty of expression; in the “developing nations,” global superpowers and local hierarchical systems vie with one another in promising their subjects the perfect liberating balance—an imported technological future combined with an

indigenous cultural past—all the while exacting from them, in the present, pledges of fealty to this or that system, economic dependence, a “temporary” suspension of critical expression, and a voluntary self-sacrifice to the Cause.

All of these freedoms—either promised or ostensibly already delivered—are in fact illusory. In the United States, for example, “free speech” is usually priced beyond the means of the speaker who happens to be female, or on welfare, or an atheist, or a nonwhite man, or a poet, or a child, or an assembly-line worker or coal miner, or a lesbian mother, or a battered wife, or a feminist organizing against the pornography industry, or a resident in an old-age home.

*Democracy forever teases us with the contrast between its ideals and its realities, between its heroic possibilities and its sorry achievements.*

—Agnes Repplier, 1916

All of these enslavements—exactied in return for the illusory freedoms—are, however, real. In the Soviet Union, for instance, “economic freedom” is an abstract construct to the woman who must stand for hours on line to purchase a pair of shoes or a piece of meat from a supply of limited quantity and quality, at the cost of as much as one-quarter of her and her husband’s combined monthly income; or to the prostitute who haunts the train station, sleeping on benches, well aware of her own reality despite the official statistics which proclaim that she does not exist; or to the homosexual man sent to the gulag for seven years despite the official proclamations that insist he (and his “problem”) does not exist; or to the devoutly religious believer for whom attending synagogue or church is a defiant political act; or to the racial minorities whose sense of identity is being subtly eroded or militaristically destroyed.

The illusion of these freedoms is made necessary by the concrete reality of these enslavements. If not for such freedom, why is the child guerrilla blown to shreds in Belfast? If not for such freedom, why did the Iranian woman

## c. 420 BC: Athens

### PRIMARY SOURCE

The objection may be raised that it was a mistake to allow the universal right of speech and a seat in council. These should have been reserved for the cleverest, the flowers of the community. But it will be found that they are acting with wise deliberation in granting to even the common sort the right of speech. If only the better people might speak or sit in council, blessings would fall to those like themselves, but to the common people the reverse. Whereas now anyone who likes, any commoner, can get up and discover something to the advantage of himself and his equals. It may be retorted, "And what sort of advantage either for himself or for the people can such a man be expected to hit upon?" The answer is that in their judgment the ignorance and lowliness of this man, together with his goodwill, are worth a great deal more to them than your superior person's virtue and wisdom, coupled with animosity. A state founded upon such institutions will not be the best state; but given a democracy, these are the right means to procure its preservation. The people does not demand that the city should be well governed and itself a slave. It desires to be free and to be a master. It does not concern itself with bad legislation. In fact, what you believe to be bad legislation is the very source of the people's strength and freedom. But if you seek good legislation, in the first place you will see the cleverest members of the community laying down the laws for the rest. The better class will curb and chastise the lower orders; the better class will deliberate on behalf of the state, and not suffer madmen to sit in council, or to speak or vote in assembly. Under the weight of such blessings, the people will in a very short time be reduced to slavery.

*From The Polity of the Athenians. Considered by some scholars to be the earliest specimen of Attic prose, this treatise has traditionally been attributed to Xenophon, although its authorship has been questioned since antiquity. The anonymous writer, sometimes known as Pseudo-Xenophon or the Old Oligarch, is broadly believed to have been an Athenian citizen with an intimate knowledge of the government. "No democrat," one translator wrote of the author in 1926, "throws into the highest relief all the shortcomings and excesses of the Athenian democracy."*

endure the tortures of the shah's interrogators? If not for such freedom, why did the Buddhist monk in Vietnam immolate himself; why does the Catholic nun prostrate herself? If not for such freedom, why does the raped wife keep her silence? If not for such freedom, why did mothers bind their daughters' feet, why do women perform clitoridectomies on their girl children, why do "First Ladies" exist? If not for the illusion of freedom, why would there be such suffering? What other possible excuse could we have?

We know what we are told freedom is, and we suspect that it's not what we actually have. We are told, strangely enough, that it's a limited resource which can be earned or rationed. We are told that we must give up freedom in order to get it. (Leaders exhort their followers to do this; adults teach this to children; men tell this to women, whites to peoples of color; humans use this justification in explaining captivity for endangered species, zoos, and animal experimentation; strip-mining, oil spills, and armament buildups; organized religions preach this message to everybody.) We are told that freedom is synonymous with choice. Yet what is choice to the shopper in the supermarket who can have her pick of twenty different breakfast cereals (all made by the same company) or to the student who can train for any career but (depending on the shape or shade of one's skin) have access to few? What was choice to the Hindu widow who faced either death on her husband's funeral pyre or a life of ostracism and slow starvation? What is choice to the voter in a one-party election—or in a two-party system when both parties articulate virtually the same politics but with ingeniously different rhetoric? Who defines the choices among which we choose?

We are told by the ultra-right that freedom may depend on our capacity to wage "limited nuclear warfare." We are told by the extreme left that freedom may consist of our capacity for "revolutionary violence." We are told by the vapid middle that freedom may be defined by our capacity for enjoying Coca-Cola, animated cartoons, a savings account, neighbors of "our own kind," and a two-week vacation every sum-



mer. We may suspect that the ultra-right and the extreme left stretch not along a straight line but curve, rather, into one circle, meeting each other in an apocalyptic blur, just as we may suspect that the middle is not a place of safety and rationality but of an emptiness that runs as smoothly as Disney World. We may suspect—but to do more than suspect is to risk being free of the right, the left, and the middle as we have known them. And to risk being truly free of all of them, but still politically engaged, is an alarming thought.

We are told by a patently mad society that sanity is freedom, and by a mirror-image counterculture that madness is liberty. (Orwell warned us of this in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in which the totalitarian government puts forth slogans like weeds: “War is peace,” it proclaims; “Freedom is slavery.”)

We hesitate, of course, to think that we are actually enslaved. To do so seems self-indulgent, since literal slavery still exists in places on our planet. Worse, to do so would give the lie to our insistence that we are free.

Yet we have no idea what freedom really is, nor why we, as human beings, seem to fear it so. Besides, almost all our intelligence has been spent avoiding the comprehension that freedom, without knowing what it is, merely constitutes license—another new and insidious form of nonfreedom—even for ourselves and especially for any we consider “other” than ourselves. We appear to have invested the creative genius of our species in discovering, maintaining, and defending the avoidance of this comprehension.

**Robin Morgan, from *The Anatomy of Freedom*.**

*Morgan began her career as a child actor and model, performing on the stage, TV, and radio. In 1967, while studying at Columbia University, she cofounded the group New York Radical Women, which protested the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the following year, denouncing “the degrading mindless-boob-girlie symbol.” The protesters threw beauty products into a “freedom trash can” in a symbolic gesture of liberation that gave rise to the myth of a ceremonial bra-burning; in fact Atlantic City police officers would not permit them to set fire to the receptacle.*

François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, by William Blake, c. 1800.



## 1891: Dublin

### PUBLIC UTILITY

Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of individualism that the world has known. Crime, which under certain conditions may seem to have created individualism, must take cognizance of other people and interfere with them. It belongs to the sphere of action. But alone, without any reference to his neighbors, without any interference, the artist can fashion a beautiful thing, and if he does not do it solely for his own pleasure, he is not an artist at all.

*The Inveterate (Prisoner)*, by Vasily Perov, 1873.

And it is to be noted that it is the fact that art is this intense form of individualism that makes the public try to exercise over it an authority that is as immoral as it is ridiculous, and as corrupting as it is contemptible. It is not quite their fault. The public has always, and in every age, been badly brought up. They are continually asking art to be popular, to please their want of taste, to flatter their absurd vanity, to tell them what they have been told before, to show them what they ought to be tired of seeing, to amuse them when they feel heavy after eating too much, and to distract their thoughts when they are wearied of their own stupidity.

Art should never try to be popular. The public should try to make itself artistic. There is





a very wide difference. If a man of science were told that the results of his experiments and the conclusions that he arrived at should be of such a character that they would not upset the received popular notions on the subject, or disturb popular prejudice, or hurt the sensibilities of people who knew nothing about science; if a philosopher were told that he had a perfect right to speculate in the highest spheres of thought, provided that he arrived at the same conclusions as were held by those who had never thought in any sphere at all—well, nowadays the man of science and the philosopher would be considerably amused. Yet it is really a very few years since both philosophy and science were subjected to brutal popular control, to authority—in fact the authority of either the general ignorance of the community, or the terror and greed for power of an ecclesiastical or governmental class. Of course, we have to a very great extent got rid of any attempt on the part of the community or the church or the government to interfere with the individualism of speculative thought, but the attempt to interfere with the individualism of imaginative art still lingers. In fact, it does more than linger: it is aggressive, offensive, and brutalizing.

In England, the arts that have escaped best are the arts in which the public takes no interest. Poetry is an instance of what I mean. We have been able to have fine poetry in England because the public does not read it, and consequently does not influence it. The public likes to insult poets because they are individual, but once they have insulted them, they leave them alone. In the case of the novel and the drama, arts in which the public does take an interest, the result of the exercise of popular authority has been absolutely ridiculous. No country produces such badly written fiction, such tedious, common work in the novel form, such silly, vulgar plays as England. It must necessarily be so. The popular standard is of such a character that no artist can get to it. It is at once too easy and too difficult to be a popular novelist. It is too easy because the requirements of the public as far as plot, style, psychology, treatment of life, and treatment of

literature are concerned are within the reach of the very meanest capacity and the most uncultivated mind. It is too difficult because to meet such requirements the artist would have to do violence to his temperament, would have to write not for the artistic joy of writing, but for the amusement of half-educated people, and so would have to suppress his individualism, forget his culture, annihilate his style, and surrender everything that is valuable in him.

The one thing that the public dislikes is novelty. Any attempt to extend the subject matter of art is extremely distasteful to the public, and yet the vitality and progress of art depend

*Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for a hermitage;  
If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul, I am free.*

—Richard Lovelace, 1649

in a large measure on the continual extension of subject matter. The public dislikes novelty because they are afraid of it. It represents to them a mode of individualism, an assertion on the part of the artist that he selects his own subject and treats it as he chooses. The public is quite right in its attitude. Art is individualism, and individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine.

**Oscar Wilde**, from *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. In 1887 Wilde began editing *Woman's World*, originally a fashion magazine. Although "no one appreciates more fully than I do the value and importance of Dress," Wilde wrote when offered the position, "we should take a wider range, as well as a higher standpoint, and deal not merely with what women wear, but with what they think, and what they feel." Under his stewardship the magazine began addressing the question of suffrage and women's education. "To make men socialists is nothing," Wilde wrote in 1889, "but to make socialism human is a great thing."

## 1644: London

### LIVE IN SIN

If we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and Doric. There must be licensing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth but what by their allowance shall be thought honest. It will ask more than the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house; they must not be suffered to prattle as they do, but must be licensed what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers? The windows also, and the balconies,

*Liberty and democracy are eternal enemies.*

—H.L. Mencken, 1925

must be thought on; these are shrewd books, with dangerous frontispieces, set to sale: Who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licensers? The villages also must have their visitors inquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebec reads, even to the bal-ladry and the gamut of every municipal fiddler.

Next, what more national corruption, for which England hears ill abroad, than household gluttony? Who shall be the rectors of our daily rioting? And what shall be done to inhibit the multitudes that frequent those houses where drunkenness is sold and harbored? Our garments also should be referred to the licensing of some more sober workmasters, to see them cut into a less wanton garb. Who shall regulate all the mixed conversation of our youth, male and female together, as is the fashion of this country? Who shall still appoint what shall be discoursed, what presumed, and no further? Lastly, who shall forbid and separate all idle resort, all evil company? These things will be, and must be, but how they shall be least hurtful, how least enticing, herein consists the grave and governing wisdom of a state.

To sequester out of the world into Atlantic and utopian politics, which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our condition; but to ordain wisely as in this world of evil, in the midst whereof God hath placed us unavoidably. Nor will Plato's licensing of books do this, which necessarily pulls along with it so many other kinds of licensing, as will make us all both ridiculous and weary, and yet frustrate; but those unwritten, or at least unconstraining, laws of virtuous education, religious and civil nurture, which Plato there mentions, as the bonds and ligaments of the commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every written statute; these they be, which will bear chief sway in such matters as these, when all licensing will be easily eluded. Impunity and remissness for certain are the bane of a commonwealth, but here the great art lies, to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work. If every action which is good or evil in man at ripe years were to be under pittance, prescription, and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could be then due to well-doing, what gramercy to be sober, just, or continent?

Many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is of force; God therefore left him free, set before him a provoking object ever almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence. Wherefore did he create passions within us, pleasures round about us, but that these rightly tempered are the very ingredients of virtue? They are not skillful considerers of human things who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter of sin; for besides that it is a huge heap increasing under the very act of diminishing, though some part of it may for a time be withdrawn from some persons, it cannot from all, in such a universal thing as books are;





*The Miracle of the Slave*, by Tintoretto, 1548.

and when this is done, yet the sin remains entire. Though ye take from a covetous man all his treasure, he has yet one jewel left, ye cannot bereave him of his covetousness. Banish all objects of lust, shut up all youth into the severest discipline that can be exercised in any hermitage, ye cannot make them chaste, that came not thither so: such great care and wisdom is required to the right managing of this point.

Suppose we could expel sin by this means. Look how much we thus expel of sin, so much we expel of virtue, for the matter of them both is the same: remove that, and ye remove them both alike. This justifies the high providence of God, who, though he commands us temperance, justice, continence, yet pours out before us even to a profuseness all desirable things,

and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means, which books freely permitted are both to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth?

**John Milton**, from *Areopagitica*. In 1642 Mary Powell, Milton's wife, left him shortly after their marriage and returned to her family. During her three-year absence, Milton wrote several tracts on the subject of divorce, which he published in violation of an ordinance requiring authors to get approval before printing their works. He wrote *Areopagitica* in protest of the treatment of John Liburne, who in 1638 had been arrested, fined, and flogged for importing subversive books. "Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature," Milton writes elsewhere in this text, "but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself."

## 1913: New York City

### ARTFUL DODGING

For a truly sincere life one talent is needed—the ability to steer clear of the forces that would warp and conventionalize and harden the personality and its own free choices and bents. All the kingdoms of this world lie waiting to claim the allegiance of the youth who enters on the career of life, and sentinels and guards stand ready to fetter and enslave him the moment he steps unwarily over the wall out of the free open road of his own individuality. And unless he dodges them and keeps straight on his path, dusty and barren though it may be, he will find himself chained a prisoner for life, and little by little his own soul will rot out of him and vanish. The wise men of the past have often preached

the duty of this open road, they have summoned youth to self-reliance, but they have not paid sufficient heed to the enemies that would impede his progress. They have been too intent on encouraging him to be independent and lead his own life to point out to him the direction from which the subtle influences that might control him would come. As a result, young men have too often believed that they were hewing out a career for themselves when they were really simply offering themselves up to some institutional Moloch to be destroyed, or, at the best, passively allowing the career or profession they had adopted to mold and carve them. Instead of working out their own destiny, they were actually allowing an alien destiny to work them out. Youth enters the big world of acting and thinking, a huge bundle of susceptibilities, keenly alive and plastic, and so eager to achieve and

*Liberation of the Women of the East, detail of a Soviet propaganda poster, 1921.*





perform that it will accept almost the first opportunity that comes to it. Now, each youth has his own unique personality and interweaving web of tendencies and inclinations, such as no other person has ever had before. It is essential that these trends and abilities be so stimulated by experience that they shall be developed to their highest capacity. And they can usually be depended upon, if freedom and opportunity are given, to grow of themselves upward toward the sun and air. If a youth does not develop, it is usually because his nature has been blocked and thwarted by the social pressures to which every one of us is subjected, and which only a few have the strength or the wisdom to resist. These pressures come often in the guise of good fortune, and the youth meets them halfway, goes with them gladly, and lets them crush him. He will do it all, too, with so easy a conscience, for is not this meeting the world and making it one's own? It is meeting the world, but it is too often only to have the world make the youth its own.

The dangers that I speak of are the influences and inducements that come to youth from family, business, church, society, state, to compromise with himself and become in more or less degree conformed to their pattern and type. "Be like us!" they all cry. "It is easiest and safest thus! We guarantee you popularity and fortune at so small a price—only the price of your best self!" Thus they seduce him insidiously rather than openly attack him. They throw their silky chains over him and draw him in. Or they press gently but ceaselessly upon him, rubbing away his original roughness, polishing him down, molding him relentlessly—and yet with how kindly and solicitous a touch—to their shape and manner. As he feels their caressing pressure against him in the darkness, small wonder is it that he mistakes it for the warm touch of friends and guides. They are friends and guides who always end, however, by being masters and tyrants. They force him to perpetuate old errors, to keep alive dying customs, to breathe new life into vicious prejudices, to take his stand against the saving new. They kill his soul, and then use the carcass as a barricade against the advancing

hosts of light. They train him to protect and conserve their own outworn institutions when he should be the first, by reason of his clear insight and freedom from crusted prejudice, to attack them.

The youth's only salvation lies, then, in dodging these pressures. It is not his business to make his own way in life so much as it is to prevent someone else from making it for him. His business is to keep the way clear and the sky open above his head. Then he will grow and be nurtured according to his needs and his inner nature. He must fight constantly to keep

*Power is so apt to be insolent, and Liberty to be saucy, that they are very seldom upon good terms.*

—George Savile, c. 1690

from his head those coverings that institutions and persons in the guise of making him warm and safe throw over his body. If young people would spend half the time in warding away the unfavorable influences that they now spend in conscientiously planning what they are going to be, they would achieve success and maintain their individuality. It seems, curiously enough, that one can live one's true life and guarantee one's individuality best in this indirect way—not by projecting one's self out upon the world aggressively, but by keeping the track clear along which one's true life may run. A sane, well-rounded, original life is attained not so much by taking thought for it as by the dodging of pressures that would limit and warp its natural growth.

**Randolph Bourne**, from *Youth and Life*. Born in 1886 in Bloomfield, New Jersey, Bourne became a regular contributor to *The Atlantic Monthly* while studying at Columbia; *Youth and Life* collects those columns. He became well known during World War I for his criticism of America's interventionist foreign policy and of prowar progressives, including his former professor John Dewey. Bourne died in December 1918 during the influenza epidemic; in an obituary Floyd Dell praised his "mood of perpetual inquiry, and the courage to go down unfamiliar ways in search of truth."

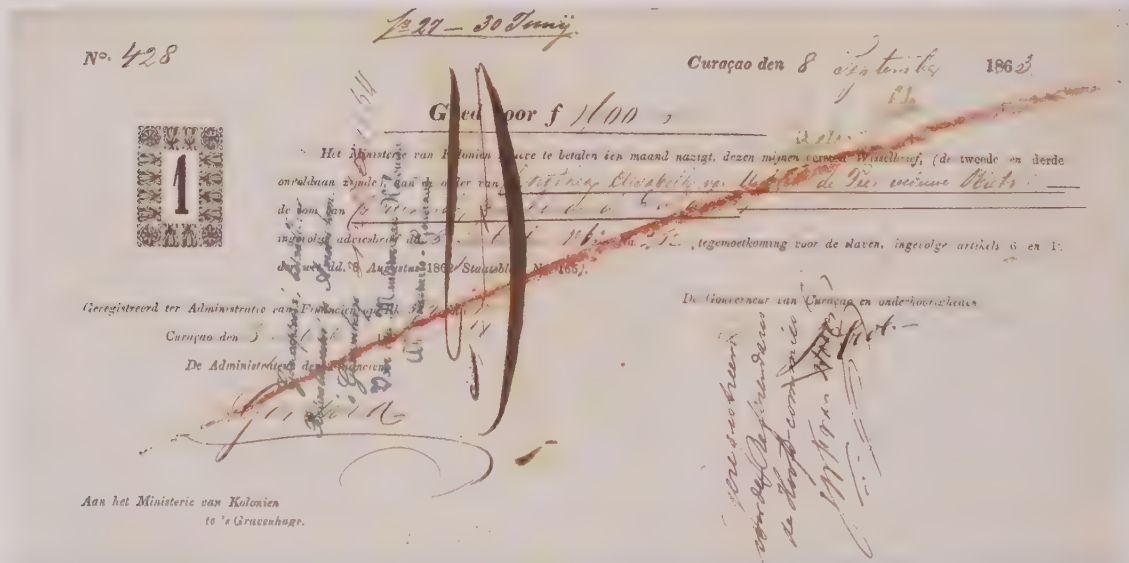
## C. 1807: Grasmere

### THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;  
And hermits are contented with their cells;  
And students with their pensive citadels;  
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,  
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,  
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,  
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:  
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom  
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,  
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:  
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

**William Wordsworth, "Nuns Fret Not."** In 1838, five years before he was named poet laureate, Wordsworth wrote that he was first "tempted" to compose poetry in the sonnet form by his "admiration of some of the sonnets of Milton," calling this "one of the innumerable obligations which, as a poet and a man, I am under to our great fellow countryman." Twenty-nine years earlier, in a letter to Walter Scott, the Romantic poet Robert Southey wrote, "I impute Wordsworth's want of perspicuity to two causes—his admiration of Milton's prose and his habit of dictating instead of writing."

Dutch colonial promissory note issued to a former slaveholder after the abolition of slavery, Suriname, 1863.





## 1984: Oceania

### NEWSPEAK

In the low-ceilinged canteen, deep underground, the lunch queue jerked slowly forward. The room was already very full and deafeningly noisy. From the grille at the counter the steam of stew came pouring forth, with a sour metallic smell which did not quite overcome the fumes of Victory Gin. On the far side of the room there was a small bar, a mere hole in the wall, where gin could be bought at ten cents the large nip.

"Just the man I was looking for," said a voice at Winston's back.

He turned round. It was his friend Syme, who worked in the Research Department. Perhaps *friend* was not exactly the right word. You did not have friends nowadays, you had comrades; but there were some comrades whose society was pleasanter than that of others. Syme was a philologist, a specialist in Newspeak. Indeed, he was one of the enormous team of experts now engaged in compiling the Eleventh Edition of the Newspeak dictionary. He was a tiny creature, smaller than Winston, with dark hair and large, protuberant eyes, at once mournful and derisive, which seemed to search your face closely while he was speaking to you.

"I wanted to ask you whether you'd got any razor blades," he said.

"Not one!" said Winston with a sort of guilty haste. "I've tried all over the place. They don't exist any longer."

Everyone kept asking you for razor blades. Actually he had two unused ones which he was hoarding up. There had been a famine of them for months past. At any given moment there was some necessary article which the Party shops were unable to supply. Sometimes it was buttons, sometimes it was darning wool, sometimes it was shoelaces; at present it was razor blades. You could get hold of them, if at all, only by scrounging more or less furtively on the "free" market.

"I've been using the same blade for six weeks," Winston added untruthfully.

The queue gave another jerk forward. As they halted he turned and faced Syme again. Each of them took a greasy metal tray from a pile at the edge of the counter.

"Nex', please!" yelled the white-aproned prole with the ladle.

Winston and Syme pushed their trays beneath the grille. Onto each was dumped swiftly the regulation lunch—a metal pannikin of pinkish-gray stew, a hunk of bread, a cube of cheese, a mug of milkless Victory Coffee, and one saccharine tablet.

*The crowning glory and the only thorough proof of freedom has always been a willing submission.*

—Vida Dutton Scudder, 1909

"There's a table over there, under that telescreen," said Syme. "Let's pick up a gin on the way."

They threaded their way across the crowded room and unpacked their trays onto the metal-topped table, on one corner of which someone had left a pool of stew, a filthy liquid mess that had the appearance of vomit.

"How is the dictionary getting on?" said Winston, raising his voice to overcome the noise.

"Slowly," said Syme. "I'm on the adjectives. It's fascinating."

He had brightened up immediately at the mention of Newspeak. He pushed his pannikin aside, took up his hunk of bread in one delicate hand and his cheese in the other, and leaned across the table so as to be able to speak without shouting.

"The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition," he said. "We're getting the language into its final shape—the shape it's going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we've finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The

## Artistic License

Can you match these visions of freedom to the artistic movements they describe?

### Declaration of Freedom

1. "Let us dare to **proclaim complete freedom** and say that with regard to such complex questions the ear alone decides. One perishes, always, not from having been too bold, but from not having been bold enough."
2. "The efficiently mechanized world could truly serve a purpose if only it would see to it that we (every one of us) gained the greatest possible amount of **free time** to enable us to meet the only obligation to nature that mankind has taken upon itself—namely to create art."
3. "All the achievements of contemporary artistic genius from Cézanne to Picasso—the **product of the ultimate in freedom**, strength, and human feeling—have been received with insults and repression."
4. "We must abandon the ways of society once and for all and **free ourselves** from its utilitarian spirit."
5. "The **freest form of emotion** is the idea, and it doesn't belong to anybody."
6. "**Unfetter** the female genius and who knows where this will lead?"
7. "Rather than being a limit, the limitations of a medium are a liberation from limitation. **We must be limited to gain freedom.**"
8. "The work improves instinctive movement and connects conscious and unconscious movement, and it allows for an experience of **freedom and pleasure** in a simple way."

### Artistic Movement

- A. Through pamphlets, demonstrations, press releases, and alternative exhibitions, **Women Artists in Revolution** advocated for female artists in the male-dominated art world of New York City in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
- B. In his 1886 "Symbolist Manifesto," the Greek-born French poet Jean Moréas presented a vision of **symbolist poetry** as a turn away from traditional themes and rhyming schemes that would free writers from outmoded conventions, allowing them to better portray the fleeting experience of life.
- C. The group of British figurative painters known as the **Stuckists** organized in opposition to conceptual art in 1999. The following year founders Billy Childish and Charles Thomson published the first of several Stuckist manifestos.
- D. In a 1948 manifesto penned by Paul-Émile Borduas, the **Automatistes** described their movement as a rebellion against mainstream Canadian culture. The multidisciplinary Quebec-based group of artists used the "automatic" method to paint, draw, and write with the hope of accessing the unconscious by relinquishing control and allowing the hand to move randomly.
- E. In a 2007 interview, saxophonist Ornette Coleman described **free jazz**, the musical style he refined and popularized in the late 1950s and early 1960s: instead of having soloists perform over a repeating harmonic sequence, Coleman encouraged his band to improvise, changing chords, pitch, bar line, and speed independently of one another.
- F. Since 2003, Ohad Naharin, the Israeli creator of a dance form he calls **Gaga**, has encouraged students to create new movements in response to cues such as *boil like spaghetti*, *taste something good in your mouth*, or *imagine a ball of energy running through your body*.
- G. The Cairo-based collective of surrealists known as **Art et Liberté** was inspired by the work of André Breton and by Egyptian art ranging from pharaonic sculptures to Coptic textiles. In its 1938 manifesto "Vive l'art dégénéré!" ("Long Live Degenerate Art!"), the collective decried the previous year's Nazi *Entartete Kunst* (*Degenerate Art*) exhibition in Munich.
- H. Led by the Polish Ukrainian painter Kazimir Malevich, who established the group in Moscow in 1915, the **Suprematists** created avant-garde works with simple, abstract shapes meant to evoke artistic feeling and explore the energy of color.

### Answers:

1.B, 2.H, 3.C, 4.D, 5.E, 6.A, 7.C, 8.F

Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050."

He bit hungrily into his bread and swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, then continued speaking, with a sort of pedant's passion. His thin dark face had become animated, his eyes

had lost their mocking expression and grown almost dreamy.

"It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only



the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take *good*, for instance. If you have a word like *good*, what need is there for a word like *bad*? *Ungood* will do just as well—better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of *good*, what sense is there in having a whole string of vague, useless words like *excellent* and *splendid* and all the rest of them? *Plusgood* covers the meaning, or *double-plusgood* if you want something stronger still. Of course we use those forms already, but in the final version of Newspeak there'll be nothing else. In the end the whole notion of goodness and badness will be covered by only six words—in reality, only one word. Don't you see the beauty of that, Winston? It was B.B.'s idea originally, of course," he added as an afterthought.

A sort of vapid eagerness flitted across Winston's face at the mention of Big Brother. Nevertheless Syme immediately detected a certain lack of enthusiasm.

"You haven't a real appreciation of Newspeak, Winston," he said almost sadly. "Even when you write it you're still thinking in Oldspeak. I've read some of those pieces that you write in the *Times* occasionally. They're good enough, but they're translations. In your heart you'd prefer to stick to Oldspeak, with all its vagueness and its useless shades of meaning. You don't grasp the beauty of the destruction of words. Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?"

Winston did know that, of course. He smiled, sympathetically he hoped, not trusting himself to speak. Syme bit off another fragment of the dark-colored bread, chewed it briefly, and went on:

"Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly *one*

## c. 680: Rabban Shapur

### FORCE OF NATURE

Man may freely go so far as to say: all excellence whatever and all orders of prayer whatever, in body or in spirit, are in the realm of free will, as well as the mind that dominates the senses. But when the influence of the spirit reigns over the mind that regulates the senses and the deliberations, freedom is taken away from nature, which no longer governs but is governed. And how could there be prayer at that time, when nature does not possess power over itself, but is conducted by an outward force without knowing whither? Nature, then, does not direct the emotions of the spirit according to its will, but captivity reigns over nature in that hour and conducts it there, where sensual apperception ceases, because nature even has no will at that time, even to the extent that it does not know whether it is within or outside the body, as scripture testifies. Does such a one have prayer who is a captive to this degree and who even does not know himself?

*From a treatise by Isaac of Nineveh. While serving as bishop of Nineveh around 676, Isaac was asked to resolve a dispute between a debtor and a creditor, but his recommendation for a loan extension was ignored because he had cited the Bible. Discouraged, he left his post after only five months, claiming that he retired for a "reason which God knows," although some scholars have suggested that he was asked to leave because he was a foreigner. He became an ascetic, spending his last days in the monastery of Rabban Shapur; it is said that he went blind from excessive reading.*

word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Already, in the Eleventh Edition, we're not far from that point. But the process will still be continuing long after you and I are dead. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak," he added with a sort of



East German guard patrolling as crowds gather a day after the opening of the Berlin Wall, 1989. Photograph by Mark Power.

mystical satisfaction. “Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?”

“Except—” began Winston doubtfully, and then stopped.

It had been on the tip of his tongue to say “Except the proles,” but he checked himself, not feeling fully certain that this remark was not in some way unorthodox. Syme, however, had divined what he was about to say.

“The proles are not human beings,” he said carelessly. “By 2050—earlier, probably—all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they’ll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of

what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like ‘freedom is slavery’ when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will *be* no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness.”

**George Orwell**, from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell completed the manuscript for this book in late 1948. The following year, three months before he died of tuberculosis, Orwell received a letter from Aldous Huxley thanking him for sending a copy of the novel. “Within the next generation,” Huxley wrote, “I believe that the world’s rulers will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by flogging and kicking them into obedience.”



## 1804: Gonaïves

### DECOLONIZATION

It is not enough to have expelled the barbarians who have bloodied our land for two centuries. It is not enough to have put an end to those resurgent factions that one after another mocked the phantom of liberty that France exposed to our eyes. It is necessary, by a final act of national authority, to forever ensure the empire of liberty in the country that gave us birth. We must seize all hope of reenslaving us from the inhuman government that has for so long kept us in the most humiliating torpor. We must then live independent or die.

Independence or death: let these sacred words unite us, and let them be the signal of battle, and of our reunion.

Citizens, my countrymen, I have assembled on this solemn day those courageous soldiers who, as liberty lay dying, spilled their blood to save her. These generals, who have guided your efforts against tyranny, have not yet done enough for your happiness. The French name still haunts our land.

Everything here recalls the cruelties of those barbarous people. Our laws, our manners, our towns: everything still carries the imprint of the French. Indeed, there are Frenchmen on our island, and yet you think you are free and independent.

What do we have in common with these executioners? Their cruelty compared with our patient moderation, their color with ours, the vast expanse of the seas that separate us, our avenging climate—all tell us that they are not our brothers, that they will never be, and that if they find asylum among us, they will again become the instigators of our troubles and our divisions.

Native citizens—men, women, girls, and boys—cast your gaze on every part of this island. Look for your wives, your husbands, your brothers, and your sisters. Look for your children, your suckling babies. What has become of them? I shudder to say it—the prey of these vultures. Instead of these precious victims, your saddened

eyes see only their assassins, these tigers, still covered with their blood, whose atrocious presence reproaches your insensitivity and your slowness in avenging them. What are you waiting for prior to appeasing their spirits? Remember that you want your remains to rest near those of your fathers, once you have driven tyranny out. Will you descend into their tombs without having avenged them? No, their bones would repulse yours.

And you precious men, intrepid generals who, without concern for your own misfortunes, have resuscitated liberty by giving her all your blood: know that you have accomplished nothing unless you give to the nations a terrible, but just, example of the vengeance that must be

*It's easy to be independent when you've got money. But to be independent when you haven't got a thing—that's the Lord's test.*

—Mahalia Jackson, 1966

wrought by a nation proud of having recovered its liberty and jealous of maintaining it. Let us frighten all those who would dare try to take it from us again. Let us begin with the French. Let them shudder when they approach our coasts, if not from the memory of the cruelties they perpetrated here, then by the terrible resolution that we shall enter into—of putting to death anyone who is born French and who would sully with their sacrilegious foot the territory of liberty.

We have dared to be free. Let us dare to be so by ourselves and for ourselves. Let us imitate the growing child: his own weight breaks the bassinet that has become useless to him and that shackles him. What people fought for us? What nation would reap the fruits of our labors? What dishonorable absurdity it would be to vanquish only to become slaves. Slaves! Let us leave that epithet to the French.

Let us walk in other footsteps; let us imitate those nations that, carrying solicitude to the future and unwilling to leave an example of cowardice for posterity, have preferred to be exterminated rather than lose their places on the list of free nations.

Natives of Haiti! My happy destiny was to become the sentinel who is to guard the idol to which you sacrifice. I have stood guard and fought, sometimes alone, and if I have been so fortunate to deliver to you the sacred charge you entrusted to my care, remember that it is now your turn to preserve it. In fighting for your liberty, I worked toward my own happiness. Before consolidating it with laws that ensure your individual liberty, your chiefs and I owe you the last proof of our devotion.

Generals and you chiefs gathered here with me for the happiness of our country, the day has arrived. This day will eternalize our glory, our independence.

Should a cool heart be among you, let him draw back and tremble at the thought of pronouncing the oath that is to unite us. Let us swear before the whole universe—to posterity, to ourselves—to renounce France forever, and to die rather than live under its dominion. To fight until our last breath for the independence of our country.

And you, people who have for too long been unfortunate: Witness the oath that we are taking. Remember that I counted on your fidelity and courage when I entered the pursuit of liberty to fight the despotism and the tyranny against which you had struggled for fourteen

years. Remember that I have sacrificed everything to fly to your defense—parents, children, fortune—and that now I am rich only in your liberty; that my name has become a horror to all those who want slavery; and that despots and tyrants never utter it unless to curse the day that I was born. If you ever reject or grumble while receiving the laws that the spirit watching over your destiny dictates to me for your happiness, you would deserve the fate of ungrateful peoples. But I reject this shocking idea. You will be the support of the liberty you cherish, the support of the chief who commands you.

Take then before him the oath of living free and independent, and to prefer death to anything that will try to place you back under the yoke. Swear at last to pursue forever the traitors and the enemies of your independence.

**Jean-Jacques Dessalines**, from the *Haitian Declaration of Independence*. Enslaved as a field laborer under a free Black master, Dessalines joined the Saint-Domingue slave rebellion in 1791 and eventually became a lieutenant to Toussaint Louverture; after Toussaint was arrested and imprisoned in France, Dessalines took his place as leader of the Haitian Revolution. The French army was expelled from Saint-Domingue in 1803; Dessalines renamed the country Haiti and redistributed all white-owned property to Black and mixed-race people, though he maintained the use of forced labor on plantations.

Entry of Henry IV into Paris (detail), by François Gérard, 1817.





## 1938: Paris

### FREE VERSE

For some time now, several centuries perhaps, we've been taught that it is inspiration's nature to strike suddenly and without warning, as lightning a tree in the forest. And if we examine the works of the poets who believed this was how inspiration worked—the Romantics, for example—we will indeed find that they aren't inspired at every moment. The "classics," less prone to posturing, come off considerably better. There are fewer flat spots in a tragedy by Corneille than in a poem by Vigny. What to conclude from this? If we define inspiration as the highest virtue, and suppose it to be of an inconstant nature, then clearly, when it's missing, the worst ensues. Because modern poets saw inspiration as by nature discontinuous, they concluded that it was this very quality that made it so precious, when they should have seen in this discontinuity a lack, a failing, an impotence.

Others, more or less conscious of this, sought some way of making inspiration continuous, but for this they turned to artificial processes that led them into a still greater passivity, and soon into complete impotence. Hence the phenomenon of the drunkard-poets, and of maniacs of every stripe, blind "seers," subhumans babbling their "inspirations." The poet is never "inspired," if by inspiration we mean something that comes about as a function of the poet's mood, the temperature, the political situation, subjective accidents, or the subconscious.

The poet is never inspired because he is the master of what others assume to be inspiration. He doesn't wait for inspiration to drop from the heavens like roasted ortolans. He *knows how to hunt*, and puts into action the irrefutable proverb "Heaven helps those who help themselves." He's never inspired because he's always inspired, because the powers of poetry are always at his disposal, obedient to his will, receptive to his guidance. He doesn't have to seek the source of his genius in soporifics. He is in no way dependent on surprises, happy accidents, or flights of

fancy. And should someone claim that such poets don't exist, I will answer: the fact that modern poets have been reduced to a discontinuous inspiration doesn't mean we must console them by calling the minus that afflicts them a plus, their failing a sign of genius, their weakness a strength. We must deprive both the public and the artist of all the consolations we can. It's time that the latter, for instance, realized that his sketches and manuscripts will be of no interest to anyone after he's dead; such tastes will have gone out of style by then. It is urgent that he get to work.

The true poet requires no consolation, then, and no form of intoxicant. He's never inspired not only because he knows the powers of language and rhythm, but also because he knows what he is and what he's capable of: he isn't a slave to free association. If this is no longer how things are, it's time we convince ourselves that this is how they should be, and that we stop misunderstanding the real nature of what we're trying to accomplish. If the glove is too large for your hand, you won't improve the fit by turning it inside out. It's time we stop again and again taking a – for a +.

You who now claim to be poets, humble yourselves before what you should be. You find it easy and agreeable to rely on your natural talents, and to remain the passive subjects of the blind inspiration that rules you. Once you've abandoned this slackness, once you've overcome the individual weaknesses that pass, wrongly, for *that* kind of poetic talent, once you've mastered your self-proclaimed inspiration—then, and only then, you will be *free*, and you will at last be able to advance triumphant toward the true powers of creation.

**Raymond Queneau**, from "Plus and Minus." Queneau studied philosophy at the University of Paris, graduating in 1926, and later worked as an editor at Gallimard and director of the *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*. In 1960 he cofounded *Oulipo*, the Workshop of Potential Literature, in order to seek out "new forms and structures" for writers, believing that formal constraint could liberate new creative energy. "The classical playwright who writes his tragedy observing a certain number of familiar rules," he wrote, "is freer than the poet who writes that which comes into his head and who is the slave of other rules of which he is ignorant."



*The Oath on the Rütli (detail), by Joseph Werner the Younger, 1677.*

## c. 108: Nicopolis

### BODY POLITIC

The man who is unrestrained—who has all things in his power as he wills—is free, but he who may be restrained or compelled or hindered or thrown into any condition against his will is a slave. “And who is unrestrained?” He who desires none of those things that belong to others. “And what are those things that belong to others?” Those that are not in our own

power, either to have or not to have, or to have them thus or so. Body, therefore, belongs to another, its parts to another, property to another. If, then, you attach yourself to any of these as your own, you will be punished as he deserves who desires what belongs to others.

“And what is all this to freedom?” It lies in nothing else than this—whether you rich people approve or not. “And who affords evidence of this?” Who but yourselves? You who have a powerful master, and live by his motion and nod, and faint away if he does but



look sternly upon you who pay your court to old men and old women and say, "I cannot do this or that, it is not in my power." Speak the truth, then, slave, and do not run away from your masters, nor deny them, nor dare to assert your freedom, when you have so many proofs of your slavery. One might indeed find some excuse for a person compelled by love to do something contrary to his opinion, even when he sees what is best without having resolution enough to follow it, since he is withheld by something overpowering, and in some measure divine. But who can bear with you who are in love with old men and old women, and perform menial offices for them, and bribe them with presents, and wait on them like a slave when they are sick, at the same time wishing they may die and inquiring of the physician whether their distemper be yet mortal? And again, when for these great and venerable magistracies and honors you kiss the hands of the slaves of others, so that you are the slave of those who are not free themselves! And then you walk about in state, a praetor or a consul. Do I not know how you came to be praetor, whence you received the consulship, who gave it to you? I know what a slave is, blinded by what he thinks good fortune.

"Are you free yourself, then?" you may ask. By Heaven, I wish and pray for it. But I admit that I cannot yet face my masters. I still pay a regard to my body, and set a great value on keeping it whole—though, for that matter, it is not whole. But I can show you one who was free, so that you may no longer seek an example. Diogenes was free. "How so?" Not because he was of free parents—he was not—but because he was so in himself, because he had cast away all that gives a handle to slavery; nor was there any way of getting at him, nor anywhere to lay hold of him, to enslave him. Everything sat loose on him; everything only just hung on. If you took hold of his possessions, he would rather let them go than follow you for them; if you took hold of his leg, he would let go of his leg; if his body, he would let go of his body; acquaintance, friends, country, just

the same. For he knew whence he had them, and from whom, and upon what conditions he received them. But he would never have forsaken his true parents, the gods, and his real country, the universe; nor would he have suffered anyone to be more dutiful and obedient to them than he; nor would anyone have died more readily for his country than he. He never had to inquire about whether he should act for the good of the whole universe; he remembered that everything that exists belongs to that administration and is commanded by its ruler. Accordingly, see what he himself says

*Freedom and equality, the two basic ideas of democracy, are to some extent contradictory.*

*Logically considered, freedom and equality are mutually exclusive, just as society and the individual are mutually exclusive.*

—Thomas Mann, 1940

and writes. "Upon this account," said he, "O Diogenes, it is in your power to converse as you will with the Persian monarch and with Archidamus, king of the Spartans." Was it because *he* was born of free parents? Or was it because *they* were descended from slaves—that all the Athenians, Spartans, and Corinthians could not converse with them as they pleased, but feared and paid court to them? Why, then, is it in your power, Diogenes? "Because I do not esteem this poor body as my own. Because I want nothing. Because this and nothing else is a law to me." These were the things that enabled him to be free.

**Epictetus**, from his Discourses. Born around 55 in Hierapolis, Epictetus was enslaved by one of Nero's administrators in Rome, where he also may have studied under the Stoic philosopher and senator Musonius Rufus. After receiving his freedom, Epictetus lectured on Stoicism and ethics in Rome, but was forced into exile in 89 following an edict by Domitian banning philosophers from the Italian peninsula. Epictetus fled to Nicopolis, where he established his own school. The historian and philosopher Arrian studied there; scholars believe that his surviving notes, which include this text, are a verbatim record of Epictetus' teachings.

## 1877: Camden, NJ

### SWEET, SANE NAKEDNESS

*Sunday, August 27*

Another day quite free from marked prostration and pain. It seems indeed as if peace and nutriment from heaven subtly filter into me as I slowly hobble down these country lanes and across fields, in the good air—as I sit here in solitude with Nature—open, voiceless, mystic, far removed, yet palpable, eloquent Nature. I merge myself in the scene, in the perfect day. Hovering over the clear brook water, I am soothed by its soft gurgle in one place, and the hoarser

*I don't want to settle. I love to roam over the prairies. There I feel free and happy, but when we settle down, we grow pale and die.*

—Satanta, 1867

murmurs of its three-foot fall in another. Come, ye disconsolate, in whom any latent eligibility is left—come get the sure virtues of creek shore, and wood and field. Two months have I absorbed them, and they begin to make a new man of me. Every day, seclusion—every day at least two or three hours of freedom, bathing, no talk, no bonds, no dress, no books, no *manners*.

Shall I tell you, reader, to what I attribute my already much-restored health? That I have been almost two years, off and on, without drugs and medicines, and daily in the open air. Last summer I found a particularly secluded little dell off one side by my creek, originally a large dugout marl-pit, now abandoned, filled with bushes, trees, grass, a group of willows, a straggling bank, and a spring of delicious water running right through the middle of it, with two or three little cascades. Here I retreated every hot day, and follow it up this summer. Here I realize the meaning of that old fellow who said he was seldom less alone than when alone. Never before did I get so close to Nature; never before did she come so close to me. By old habit, I penciled down from to time

to time, almost automatically, moods, sights, hours, tints and outlines, on the spot. Let me specially record the satisfaction of this current forenoon, so serene and primitive, so conventionally exceptional, natural.

An hour or so after breakfast I wended my way down to the recesses of the aforesaid dell, which I and certain thrushes, catbirds, etc., had all to ourselves. A light southwest wind was blowing through the treetops. It was just the place and time for my Adamic air bath and flesh brushing from head to foot. So hanging clothes on a rail nearby, keeping old broad-brim straw on head and easy shoes on feet, haven't I had a good time the last two hours! First with the stiff elastic bristles rasping arms, breast, sides, till they turned scarlet—then partially bathing in the clear waters of the running brook—taking everything very leisurely, with many rests and pauses—stepping about barefooted every few minutes now and then in some neighboring black ooze, for unctuous mudbath to my feet—a brief second and third rinsing in the crystal running waters—rubbing with the fragrant towel—slow negligent promenades on the turf up and down in the sun, varied with occasional rests, and further frictions of the bristle brush—sometimes carrying my portable chair with me from place to place, as my range is quite extensive here, nearly a hundred rods, feeling quite secure from intrusion (and that indeed I am not at all nervous about, if it accidentally happens).

As I walked slowly over the grass, the sun shone out enough to show the shadow moving with me. Somehow I seemed to get identity with each and every thing around me; in its condition Nature was naked, and I was also. It was too lazy, soothing, and joyous-equable to speculate about. Yet I might have thought somehow in this vein: Perhaps the inner, never-lost rapport we hold with earth, light, air, trees, etc., is not to be realized through eyes and mind only but through the whole corporeal body, which I will not have blinded or bandaged any more than the eyes. Sweet, sane, still nakedness in Nature! Ah, if poor,





Hungarian freedom fighters examining the remains of a Soviet tank, Budapest, 1956. Photograph by David Hurn.

sick, prurient humanity in cities might really know you once more! Is not nakedness then indecent? No, not inherently. It is your thought, your sophistication, your fear, your respectability, that is indecent. There come moods when these clothes of ours are not only too irksome to wear but are themselves indecent. Perhaps indeed he or she to whom the free, exhilarating ecstasy of nakedness in Nature has never been eligible (and how many thousands there are!) has not really known what purity is—nor what faith or art or health really is. (Probably the whole curriculum of first-class philosophy, beauty, heroism, form, illustrated by the old Hellenic race—the highest height and deepest depth known to civilization in those departments—came from their natural and

religious idea of nakedness.) Many such hours, from time to time, the last two summers—I attribute my partial rehabilitation largely to them. Some good people may think it a feeble or half-cracked way of spending one's time and thinking. Maybe it is.

**Walt Whitman**, from *Specimen Days*. In 1862 Whitman traveled south in search of his brother, whom he feared a casualty of the Battle of Fredericksburg. After finding his brother unharmed, Whitman volunteered in Union hospitals, dressing wounds and writing letters to victims' families. He recounted his experiences during and after the Civil War in this book, which he called a "mélange of loafing, looking, hobbling, sitting, traveling—a little thinking thrown in for salt." Leslie Jamison describes it as a series of "accumulations, joyous and jarring: summer pleasures, urban streetscapes, bodies strewn across battlefields."

## 1975: Durban

### WRITER BLOCKS

What is a writer's freedom? To me it is his right to maintain and publish to the world a deep, intense, private view of the situation in which he finds his society. If he is to work as well as he can, he must take, and be granted, freedom from the public conformity of political interpretation, morals, and tastes.

Living when we do, where we do, as we do, freedom leaps to mind as a political concept exclusively—and when people think of freedom for writers, they visualize at once the great mound of burnt, banned, and proscribed books our civilization has piled up—a pyre to which our own country has added and is adding its contribution. The right to be left alone to write what one pleases is not an academic issue to those of us who live and work in South Africa.

*Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently.*

—Rosa Luxemburg, 1918

Bannings and banishments are terrible known hazards a writer must face—and many have faced—if the writer belongs where freedom of expression, among other freedoms, is withheld. But sometimes creativity is frozen rather than destroyed. A Thomas Mann survives exile to write a *Doctor Faustus*; a Pasternak smuggles *Doctor Zhivago* out of a ten-year silence; a Solzhenitsyn emerges with his terrible world intact in the map of *The Gulag Archipelago*. Nearer our home continent: a Chinua Achebe, writing from America, does not trim his prose to please a Nigerian regime under which he cannot live; a Dennis Brutus grows in reputation abroad while his poetry remains forbidden at home; and a Breyten Breytenbach, after accepting the special dispensation from racialist law which allowed him to visit his home country with a wife who is not white, no doubt has to accept the equally curious circumstance that his publisher would

not publish the book he was to write about the visit, since it was sure to be banned.

Through all these vicissitudes, real writers go on writing the truth as they see it. And they do not agree to censor themselves. You can burn the books, but the integrity of creative artists is not incarnate on paper any more than on canvas—it survives so long as the artist himself cannot be persuaded, cajoled, or frightened into betraying it.

All this, hard though it is to live, is the part of the writer's fight for freedom the world finds easiest to understand.

There is another threat to that freedom, in any country where political freedom is withheld. It is a more insidious one, and one of which fewer people will be aware. It's a threat which comes from the very strength of the writer's opposition to the repression of political freedom. That other, paradoxically wider composite freedom—the freedom of his private view of life—may be threatened by the very awareness of what is expected of him. And often what is expected of him is conformity to an orthodoxy of opposition.

There will be those who regard him as their mouthpiece; people whose ideals, as a human being, he shares, and whose cause, as a human being, is his own. They may be those whose suffering is his own. His identification with, admiration for, and loyalty to these set up a state of conflict within him. His integrity as a human being demands the sacrifice of everything to the struggle put up on the side of free men. His integrity as a writer goes the moment he begins to write what he ought to write.

This is—whether all admit it or not—and will continue to be a particular problem for black writers in South Africa. For them, it extends even to an orthodoxy of vocabulary: the jargon of struggle, derived internationally, is right and adequate for the public platform, the newsletter, the statement from the dock; it is not adequate, it is not deep enough, wide enough, flexible enough, cutting enough, fresh enough for the vocabulary of the poet, the short-story writer, or the novelist.



## 1765: Paris

### ON SLANDER

Libel is severely punished in aristocratic governments because the magistrates consider themselves small sovereigns who are not big enough to scorn insults. This is why the ancient Romans who formed an aristocracy decreed capital punishment for the authors of libel.

In a democracy it is not appropriate to deal severely with libel using the reasons for criminal punishment of absolute and aristocratic governments.

In enlightened monarchies libel is regarded not so much as a crime as a matter for public regulation. The English abandon libel to its own destiny and regard it as an inconvenience of a free government that by the nature of human things cannot be avoided. They believe that we must tolerate not the unbridled license of satire, but the freedom of discourse and writing as a sign of the civil and political liberty of a state, because it is less dangerous that some men of honor should be inappropriately slandered than if writers were not to dare enlighten the country about the conduct of some powerful people with authority. Power has such abundant means to throw terror and tyranny into men's hearts, it has such an inclination to unjustly inflate itself, that much more is to be feared of the adulation that conforms to it than the boldness that exposes its behavior. When the governors of a state do not give any real cause for the censure of their conduct, they have nothing to fear from calumny and lies. Free from all reproach, they walk with confidence and do not fear to explain their administration; the shafts of satire pass over their heads and fall at their feet. Honest men embrace the course of virtue and punish calumny with scorn.

Neither is it, as the claim will be made, “a language of the people” in a situation where certainly it is very important that imaginative writing must not reach the elite only. The jargon of struggle lacks both the inventive pragmatism and the poetry of common speech—those qualities the writer faces the challenge to capture and explore imaginatively, expressing as they do the soul and identity of a people as no thousandth-hand “noble evocation” of clichés ever could.

Libel is still less to be feared with respect to speculative opinion. Truth has such a triumphant ascendancy over error! It has only to appear to attract esteem and admiration. We see it every day breaking the chains of fraud and tyranny or piercing through the clouds of superstition and ignorance. What would it not produce if all the barriers that opposed its passage were to open!

One would be wrong to conclude from the abuse of a thing to the necessity of its destruction. Nations have endured such abuse from kings and their magistrates; must we for this reason abolish the kingdom and the magistracy? All good is ordinarily accompanied by some drawback and cannot be separated from it. The question is to consider what must prevail and determine our choice in favor of the greatest advantage.

Finally, say these same political thinkers, all the methods employed to this day to prevent or proscribe libel in monarchies have been unsuccessful, both before and especially since printing spread throughout Europe. By punishing the authors of odious (and justly defended) libel, the demand and the supply of libel has greatly increased.

**Louis de Jaucourt**, *from the Encyclopédie*. Around 1734, having studied philology, mathematics, and medicine, Jaucourt began a six-volume Latin dictionary of anatomy. He sent his only copy of the manuscript to a publisher in Amsterdam, but it was lost in a shipwreck off the coast of Holland. Starting in 1751 Jaucourt wrote more than seventeen thousand articles for the *Encyclopédie* on subjects including democracy, equality, and law. Denis Diderot called him “the slave of the *Encyclopédie*,” remarking that he lacked the other contributors’ wit and style.

The black writer needs his freedom to assert that the idiom of Chatsworth, Dimbaza, Soweto is no less a vehicle for the expression of pride, self-respect, suffering, anger—or anything else in the spectrum of thought and emotion—than the language of Watts or Harlem.

The fact is, even on the side of the angels, a writer has to reserve the right to tell the truth as he sees it, in his own words, without being accused of letting the side down. For as Philip

# Ghost in the Machine

Technological attempts to limit speech, thought, and action

Location	Control	Evasion
China	In 2000 the Chinese government initiated its Golden Shield Project, a program to control citizens' internet use. Government servers prevent users from visiting blacklisted sites by routing all traffic through a small number of access points.	The anti-censorship organization GreatFire has attempted to evade the ban by creating mirror websites on cloud networks such as Amazon Web Services that it believes the Chinese government will not block because of potential economic harm to Chinese businesses. GreatFire has dubbed the strategy "collateral freedom."
Culver City, CA	Internal documents from TikTok's content-moderation team, released by the Intercept in 2020, suggest moderators were told to suppress uploads from users who are "chubby" or have an "abnormal body shape," "ugly facial looks," or "too many wrinkles." The rationale given was that these videos are "less attractive" to users.	TikTok has also been accused of removing content related to gender identity and sexuality. Users have responded by using coded hashtags such as #alphabetmafia—an ironic reference to the initialism LGBTQ—which has amassed nearly two billion views on the platform.
Menlo Park, CA	Meta began limiting what employees could post on Workplace, its internal social-media network, in 2020. According to the company's Respectful Communication Policy, one prohibited topic is the ethics of abortion.	After the removal of a Workplace post discussing abortion in May 2022, a female employee posted a follow-up message: "The entire process of dealing with the Respectful Communication Policy... has felt dehumanizing and dystopian."
Texas	A law passed in September 2021 permits individuals to sue any person or organization facilitating an abortion after six weeks of pregnancy. Free-speech advocates believe this enforcement mechanism has led to digital self-censorship in Texas, discouraging internet users from sharing information about abortion options or organizing to support reproductive rights.	After the Supreme Court's ruling in <i>Dobbs v. Jackson</i> overturned federal legal protections for abortion, the Electronic Frontier Foundation released a set of digital-privacy recommendations for people seeking an abortion, among them using a secondary phone, revoking location-data permissions, and encrypting text messages.
North Korea	North Korean citizens use custom-built Android-based smartphones installed with government applications that monitor use. One app, Trace Viewer, takes screenshots at random intervals and permanently saves them on the device in order to dissuade users from engaging in prohibited activities.	During interviews with escapees, the human rights organization Lumen discovered that some North Koreans have acquired enough technical knowledge of smartphones to evade state controls. They described a "rooting" application that gives the user the ability to modify or delete any file.
Iran	In early 2022 Iranian #MeToo activists sharing stories of sexual violence on Instagram were flooded with comments, messages, and follower requests from over one million internet bots. Digital forensics company Qurium traced the fake accounts to two Pakistani social-media marketing firms but was unable to determine who had paid for the bots.	Many activists made their accounts private to limit fake followers, which curtailed their ability to grow audiences. "The only place we have to spread our message about human rights is social media and Instagram," one activist noted.
Russia	Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government's media-monitoring agency Roskomnadzor blocked access to Facebook, Instagram, the BBC, and the website of the Ukrainian government. In March 2022 Vladimir Putin signed into law new penalties for Russian citizens who show "blatant disrespect" online.	On February 24, 2022, the day the invasion of Ukraine began, Russian social-media users started posting coded references to mass protests, including an emoji of a person walking and a drawing of poet Aleksandr Pushkin, suggesting gathering in Pushkin Square.



Toynbee has written, "The writer's gift to the reader is not social zest or moral improvement or love of country, but an enlargement of the reader's apprehension."

This is the writer's unique contribution to social change. He needs to be left alone, by brothers as well as enemies, to make this gift. And he must make it even against his own inclination.

These conditions about which I have been talking are the special though common ones of writers beleaguered in the time of the bomb and the color bar, as they were in the time of the jackboot and rubber truncheon and, no doubt, back through the ages whose shameful symbols keep tally of oppression in the skeleton cupboard of our civilizations.

Other conditions, more transient, less violent, affect the freedom of a writer's mind.

What about literary fashion, for example? What about the cycle of the innovator, the imitators, the debasers, and then the bringing forth of an innovator again? A writer must not be made too conscious of literary fashion, any more than he must allow himself to be inhibited by the mandarins, if he is to get on with work that is his own. I say "made conscious" because literary fashion is a part of his working conditions; he can make the choice of rejecting it, but he cannot choose whether it is urged upon him by publishers and readers, who do not let him forget he has to eat.

That rare marvel, an innovator, should be received with shock and excitement. And his impact may set off people in new directions of their own. But the next innovator rarely—I would almost say never—comes from his imitators, those who create a fashion in his image. Not all worthwhile writing is an innovation, but I believe it always comes from an individual vision, privately pursued. The pursuit may stem from a tradition, but a tradition implies a choice of influence, whereas a fashion makes the influence of the moment the only one for all who are contemporary to it.

A writer needs all these kinds of freedom, built on the basic freedom from censorship. He



Broad-billed hummingbird, 2017.  
Photograph by Tony Campbell.

does not ask for shelter from living, but for exposure to it without possibility of evasion. He is fiercely engaged with life on his own terms, and ought to be left to it, if anything is to come of the struggle. Any government, any society—any vision of a future society—that has respect for its writers must set them as free as possible to write in their own various ways, in their own choices of form and language, and according to their own discovery of truth.

Turgenev expresses this best: "Without freedom in the widest sense of the word—in relation to oneself...indeed, to one's people and one's history, a true artist is unthinkable; without that air, it is impossible to breathe."

And I add my last word: in that air alone, commitment and creative freedom become one.

**Nadine Gordimer**, from *"A Writer's Freedom."* Born outside Johannesburg, Gordimer left school at eleven for health reasons and spent the next five years reading and writing in solitude. In 1963 she was one of the few white South Africans to speak out when the government implemented the Publications and Entertainments Act, under which "undesirable" content could be banned. "There was only one way to oppose censorship if one doubted censorship at all, as there has always been only one way to oppose other apartheid legislation, if one doubts apartheid at all: on principle, totally, and from the beginning," she wrote in 1972.

## 2024: United States

### MACHINE LEARNING

This is a warning. Please read carefully.

By now you've probably seen a Predictor; millions of them have been sold by the time you're reading this. For those who haven't seen one, it's a small device, like a remote for opening your car door. Its only features are a button and a big green LED. The light flashes if you press the button. Specifically, the light flashes one second before you press the button.

Most people say that when they first try it, it feels like they're playing a strange game, one where the goal is to press the button after seeing the flash, and it's easy to play. But when you try to break the rules, you find that you can't. If you try to press the button without having seen a flash, the flash immediately appears, and no mat-

ter how fast you move, you never push the button until a second has elapsed. If you wait for the flash, intending to keep from pressing the button afterward, the flash never appears. No matter what you do, the light always precedes the button press. There's no way to fool a Predictor.

The heart of each Predictor is a circuit with a negative time delay; it sends a signal back in time. The full implications of the technology will become apparent later, when negative delays of greater than a second are achieved, but that's not what this warning is about. The immediate problem is that Predictors demonstrate that there's no such thing as free will.

There have always been arguments showing that free will is an illusion, some based on hard physics, others based on pure logic. Most people agree these arguments are irrefutable, but no one ever really accepts the conclusion. The experience of having free will is too powerful for

*The Butchers of Freedom, by James Gillray, 1788.*



*The BUTCHERS of FREEDOM.*



an argument to overrule. What it takes is a demonstration, and that's what a Predictor provides.

Typically, a person plays with a Predictor compulsively for several days, showing it to friends, trying various schemes to outwit the device. The person may appear to lose interest in it, but no one can forget what it means; over the following weeks, the implications of an immutable future sink in. Some people, realizing that their choices don't matter, refuse to make any choices at all. Like a legion of *Bartleby the scrivener*s, they no longer engage in spontaneous action. Eventually, a third of those who play with a Predictor must be hospitalized because they won't feed themselves. The end state is akinetic mutism, a kind of waking coma. They'll track motion with their eyes, and change position occasionally, but nothing more. The ability to move remains, but the motivation is gone.

Before people started playing with Predictors, akinetic mutism was very rare, a result of damage to the anterior cingulate region of the brain. Now it spreads like a cognitive plague. People used to speculate about a thought that destroys the thinker, some unspeakable Lovecraftian horror, or a Gödel sentence that crashes the human logical system. It turns out that the disabling thought is one that we've all encountered: the idea that free will doesn't exist. It just wasn't harmful until you believed it.

Doctors try arguing with the patients while they still respond to conversation. We had all been living happy, active lives before, they reason, and we hadn't had free will then either. Why should anything change? "No action you took last month was any more freely chosen than one you take today," a doctor might say. "You can still behave that way now." The patients invariably respond, "But now I know." And some of them never say anything again.

Some will argue that the fact that the Predictor causes this change in behavior means that we do have free will. An automaton can't become discouraged, only a freethinking entity can. The fact that some individuals descend into akinetic mutism while others don't just highlights the importance of making a choice.

Unfortunately, such reasoning is faulty; every form of behavior is compatible with determinism. One dynamic system may fall into a basin of attraction and wind up at a fixed point, while another exhibits chaotic behavior indefinitely, but both are completely deterministic.

I'm transmitting this warning to you from just over a year in your future; it's the first lengthy message received when circuits with negative delays in the megasecond range are used to build communication devices. Other messages will follow, addressing other issues. My message to you is this: Pretend that you

*Like a broken gong be still, be silent. Know the stillness of freedom where there is no more striving.*

—Siddhartha Gautama, c. 500 BC

have free will. It's essential that you behave as if your decisions matter, even though you know they don't. The reality isn't important; what's important is your belief, and believing the lie is the only way to avoid a waking coma. Civilization now depends on self-deception. Perhaps it always has.

And yet I know that, because free will is an illusion, it's all predetermined who will descend into akinetic mutism and who won't. There's nothing anyone can do about it; you can't choose the effect the Predictor has on you. Some of you will succumb and some of you won't, and my sending this warning won't alter those proportions. So why did I do it?

Because I had no choice.

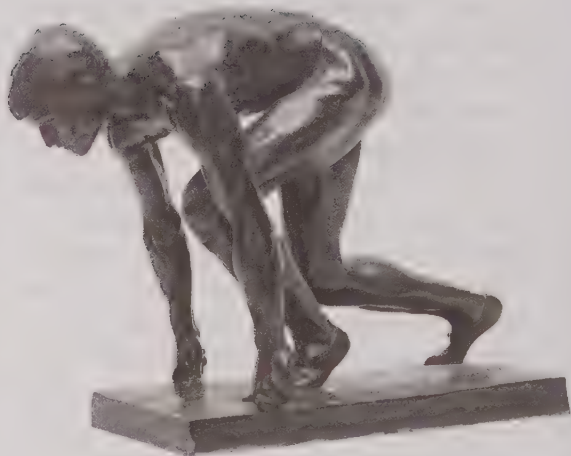
**Ted Chiang.** *"What's Expected of Us."* Born on Long Island in 1967 to parents who had fled China for Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War, Chiang began writing science fiction in high school and later studied computer science at Brown University. In 1990 he published his first short story, "Tower of Babylon," which won a Nebula Award; eight years later he published *A Story of Your Life*, later adapted as the film *Arrival*. "I believe that the universe is deterministic," he said in a 2017 interview, "but that the most meaningful definition of free will is compatible with determinism."

## 1896: New York City

### DEPARTURE GATE

To acquire freedom we have to get beyond the limitations of this universe; it cannot be found here. Perfect equilibrium, or what the Christians call the peace that surpasses all understanding, cannot be had in this universe, not in heaven, nor in any place where our mind and thoughts can go, where the senses can feel, or which the imagination can conceive. No such place can give us that freedom, because all such places would be within our universe, and it is limited by space, time, and causation. There may be places that are more ethereal than this earth of ours, where enjoyments may be keener, but even those places must be in the universe, and therefore in bondage to law; so we have to go beyond, and real religion begins where this little universe ends. These little joys and sorrows and knowledge of things end there, and the reality begins. Until we give up the thirst after life, the strong attachment to this our transient, conditioned existence, we have no hope of catching even a glimpse of that infinite freedom beyond. It stands to reason, then, that there is only one way to attain that freedom which is the goal of all the noblest aspirations of mankind, and that is by giving up this little life, giving up this little universe, giving up this earth, giving up heaven, giving up the body, giving up the mind, giving up everything that is limited and conditioned. If we give up our attachment to this little universe of the senses, or of the mind, we shall be free immediately. The only way to come out of bondage is to go beyond the limitations of law, to go beyond causation.

Everyone must work in the universe. Only those who are perfectly satisfied with the self, whose desires do not go beyond the self, whose mind never strays out of the self, to whom the self is all in all, only those do not work. The rest must work. A current rushing down of its own nature falls into a hollow and makes a whirlpool, and after running a little in that whirlpool, it



*The Sprinter*, by Charles Albert Lopez, 1902.

emerges again to go on unchecked. Each human life is like that current. It gets into the whirl, gets involved in this world of space, time, and causation, whirls around a little, crying out “my father, my brother, my name, my fame,” and so on, and at last emerges out of it and regains its original freedom. The whole universe is doing that. Whether we know it or not, whether we are conscious or unconscious of it, we are all working to get out of the dream of the world. Man’s experience in the world is to enable him to get out of its whirlpool.

We see that the whole universe is working. For what? For salvation, for liberty; from the atom to the highest being, working for the one end—liberty for the mind, for the body, for the spirit. All things are always trying to get freedom, flying away from bondage. The sun, the moon, the earth, the planets, all are trying to fly away from bondage.

**Vivekananda**, from *Karma Yoga*. Born in 1863 to an upper-middle-class Bengali family, Vivekananda traveled to the United States in 1893 to participate in the World’s Parliament of Religions as a spokesperson for Hinduism. After arriving in the country, he met Katherine Sanborn, a poet and lecturer who, impressed by his “lordly, imposing stride, as if he ruled the universe,” invited him to her farmhouse in Massachusetts before the conference. “If anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart,” Vivekananda said at the conference.



## C. 1119: Prague

### WE DON'T TALK ABOUT LIBUŠE

Among women Libuše was remarkably unique, provident in judgment, resolute in speech, in body chaste, of noble morals. She never took sides in deciding disputes among people; she was kind, even sweet, to everyone. She was a glorious ornament to the feminine sex and issued orders as full of foresight as if she were a man. Nevertheless, because nobody is entirely blessed, this woman so outstanding and worthy of praise was—alas for unhappy human fate—a prophetess. And because she truly foretold the future, after her father's death, the whole tribe gathered and proclaimed her as its judge.

At that time a large dispute arose concerning the unplowed border separating neighboring fields, between two inhabitants distinguished by fortune and ancestry and whose judgment was respected by others. These two began such a quarrel that they dug their fingernails into each others' thick beards, shamefully hurled indiscriminate insults, and snapped their fingers under each other's noses. In such a manner they entered the courtyard noisily, stood before their lady Libuše, and implored her to settle their dispute according to law and justice. At that time she was indulging herself extravagantly, as immodest women do who have no husband to fear. She was lying softly on embroidered cushions piled very high, and leaning on her elbow, as if during childbearing.

She followed the path of justice and, disregarding the personalities of these people, she judged the dispute that originated between them according to law. But then the loser was enraged, shook his head twice or thrice, and according to his habit, struck the earth three times with his stick, spattered his beard with spit from his full mouth, and cried: "This is an unbearable wrong to men! A woman with a hole who dwells on men's trials in her cunning mind! We know of course that a woman, whether she stands or sits on a throne, has little reason. How much less does she have when she

is lying on cushions? In that moment she is fit more to meet a man than to deliver findings to warriors. One thing is sure: all women have long hair but short reason. It would be better for men to die than to endure this. We alone were deserted by nature to be a disgrace among all nations and tribes, so that we have neither chieftain nor the government of men, and we suffer under women's law."

The lady covered her disgrace and, concealing her injured heart with feminine shyness, smiled and said: "As you say, I am woman, and I live as a woman, but you perhaps think that I have little reason because I do not judge you with an iron rod. Since you live without fear, you justly do not care about me. Because where there is fear, awe, and esteem, there is also discipline. And

*The self is like an infant: given free rein, it craves to suckle.*

—*al-Busiri, c. 1250*

now it is very necessary that you have an administrator crueler than a woman. In the same way that doves once disdained the white kite, whom they elected king, you disdain me, and they made the hawk their king. He was much more cruel, invented crimes, and began to kill the innocent as well as the guilty. And since that time, hawks eat doves. Now go home, and whom you elect tomorrow as your master, I will marry."

On the second day, as it was ordered, the assembly was summoned and people gathered. The woman sitting on a high throne spoke to the coarse men: "How miserable you are, people, when you cannot live freely, for you unwittingly scorn freedom, which no true man gives up except with life, and you submit yourself voluntarily to unusual subjection. Woe, you will regret it later, as frogs regretted it when the water snake, whom they appointed their king, started to kill them. If you do not know what a duke's rights are, I will try to tell you something on this matter. First, it is easy to appoint a duke, but it is very difficult to depose one once appointed. Now this man is in your power, whether you bring him



*Underground Routes to Canada, a map from Wilbur H. Siebert's *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, 1898.*

forward or not, but once he has been proposed, everything you will give him will be in his power. When you face him, your knees will tremble as in a fever; your speechless tongue will stick to your dry palate. Hearing his voice, you will be in great fear, simply answering, 'Yes, sir, yes, sir,' and he will condemn this one, that one he will have killed, the other one he will have hanged, by his mere motion and without your counsel. You, yourself, and from among you, whomever he chooses, he will make servants of some and others peasants, taxpayers, collectors, hangmen, constables, cooks, bakers' or millers' customers. He will appoint for himself colonels, centurions, and bailiffs; vineyard workers and field-workers; harvesters, blacksmiths, furriers, and cobblers. He will make your sons and daughters his servants, and he will take also the best according to his will from your cattle, horses, mares, and livestock. He will take and turn to his profit everything good that you have in your villages, fields, grounds, meadows, and vineyards. But why am I detaining you so long? Why am I saying this, as if I wanted to frighten you? When you insist on your resolution and when there is no mistaking your wish, I will tell you the name of the duke and where he is."

Of course people answered this with a bewildered cry; they unanimously demanded

that a duke be given them. "Look," she said. "Behold, beyond those mountains"—and she pointed with her finger—"is there not the big river Břlána, and on its bank a village that can be seen, the name of which is Stadice? In its territory is a fallow land; its width and length are twelve footsteps, and it is remarkable that even though it lies amid numerous fields, it does not belong to any of them. There your duke is plowing with a pair of piebald oxen. Now, if you like, take my gown, cloak, and shawls that will suit a duke, deliver a message to this man from me and my people, and bring back the duke as a husband for me. The name of this man is Přemysl; he will think about many rights concerning your necks and heads. His descendants will reign in this country till the end of time."

#### **Cosmas of Prague, from *Bohemian Chronicle*.**

Born around 1045, Cosmas studied grammar in Liège; around 1086 he became canon of Prague. Called "the first Slavic historian of a Slavic people" by one of his translators, Cosmas began writing his chronicle when he was nearly eighty years old, intending to trace the Czech people back to Noah. Some historians believe the work was commissioned by Bohemian dukes, while others suggest that Cosmas had no need for a patron. In the 1810s Cosmas' chronicle was used as source material for a collection of forged manuscripts purported to be romantic epics from early Bohemia.



## 1785: Black Forest

### VICE PRESIDENT

Madame Duclos took up the thread of her tales: “‘Nothing,’ the Président from the Courts of Justice said, ‘is fundamentally good or fundamentally bad—everything is simply relative to our customs, opinions, and prejudices. Once this point is established, it is entirely possible that something perfectly indifferent in its own right might nevertheless seem contemptible in your eyes and yet most delightful in mine; and the moment I develop a liking for it—as difficult as it may be to determine its true worth—the moment it amuses me, would I not be mad to deprive myself of it just because you disapprove? Come, come, my dear Duclos—the life of one man is so unimportant that one may trifle with it to one’s heart’s content, just as one would that of a cat or a dog; it is up to the weakest to defend themselves—they have more or less the same weapons we do. And since you have such scruples,’ my man added, ‘what then would you say about the fantasy of a friend of mine?’ And if it pleases you, messieurs, this taste he described to me will provide us with our final tale this evening.

“The Président told me this friend wanted only women who are due to be executed. ‘The shorter the interval between the moment they are delivered to him and the moment they are to perish, the more he pays for them, but it must always be after they have been notified of their sentence. As his office brings this kind of prize within reach, he never lets one slip through his fingers, and I have seen him pay as much as one hundred louis for a tête-à-tête of this type; he does not, however, have his way with them—he demands only that they show their buttocks and that they shit; he claims that nothing tastes like the shit of a woman who has just suffered such a reversal of fortune. There is no limit to his imagination when it comes to procuring these tête-à-têtes, and moreover—as you can well imagine—he does not wish to be identified by these women. Sometimes he passes himself off as the confessor, sometimes

as a friend of the family, and in his overtures he always places great emphasis on his desire to be of service to them as long as they are willing to go along with him. And when he has finished, when he has had his way, how do you imagine he concludes his operation, my dear Duclos?’ the Président asked me... ‘Just as I do, my dear friend. He keeps his come for the denouement and lets it go as he sees them die most delectably.’ ‘Oh, that is so wicked!’ I told him. ‘Wicked?’ he interrupted... ‘That’s mere verbiage, my child. Nothing that makes one hard is wicked, and the only crime in the world is to refuse oneself that pleasure.’”

*The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it.*

—John Stuart Mill, 1859

“Indeed, there was nothing he refused himself,” said Madame Martaine, “and Madame Desgranges and I shall, I dare say, have occasion to regale the company with some lubricious and criminal anecdotes about the same character.”

“Oh, so much the better!” said Curval. “For there’s a man I already like a great deal—that’s how one should view pleasures, and I like his philosophy immensely. The lengths to which man—already constricted in all his amusements, in all his faculties—will go to confine the scope of his existence out of unworthy prejudice is quite incredible. One cannot comprehend, for example, what possesses the man who makes a crime out of murder to impose such limits on all his delights: he has deprived himself of a hundred pleasures each more delicious than the last by having the audacity to adopt the odious fantasy of that prejudice; and what the devil does it matter to Nature whether there are one, ten, twenty, five hundred more or fewer men in the world? Do conquerors, heroes, tyrants submit themselves to that absurd law according to which we dare not do unto others anything we would not have them do

unto us? In truth, my friends, I shall not hide from you that I tremble when I hear fools dare to tell me that that is the law of Nature, etc. Heavens above! Craving murders and crimes, Nature passes her law to encourage and inspire us to commit such acts, and the only law she inscribes in the depths of our hearts is to satisfy ourselves at no matter whose expense. But patience—perhaps I shall soon have a more opportune moment to discuss these subjects more fully with you. I have studied these in great depth, and I hope that sharing them with you will leave you as convinced as I am that the only way to serve Nature is to follow her desires blindly, whatever they may be, because as vice is

as necessary as virtue to the preservation of her laws, she understands how to steer us at every turn toward that which she believes is necessary at that moment.”

**Marquis de Sade**, from *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Arrested several times for kidnapping and abusing young prostitutes, maids, and peasants, Sade spent much of his life imprisoned or confined to insane asylums, though he was often allowed access to his vast library and a writing desk. He wrote this novel while imprisoned in the Bastille in 1785, using small pieces of paper that he glued into a thirty-nine-foot-long scroll. Sade was transferred to a different facility a few nights before revolutionaries stormed the prison in July 1789. Stolen from his cell, the manuscript was later rediscovered and published in 1904.

A Seated Monkey on a Chain, by Hendrick Goltzius, c. 1600.





# 1938: Mexico City

## VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

In the contemporary world we must recognize the ever more widespread destruction of those conditions under which intellectual creation is possible. From this follows of necessity an increasingly manifest degradation not only of the work of art but also of the specifically artistic personality. The regime of Hitler, now that it has rid Germany of all those artists whose work expressed the slightest sympathy for liberty, however superficial, has reduced those who still consent to take up pen or brush to the status of domestic servants of the regime whose task it is to glorify it on order, according to the worst possible aesthetic conventions. If reports may be believed, it is the same in the Soviet Union, where Thermidorian reaction is now reaching its climax.

It goes without saying that we do not identify ourselves with the currently fashionable catchword “neither fascism nor communism!”—a shibboleth that suits the temperament of the Philistine, conservative and frightened, clinging to the tattered remnants of the “democratic” past. True art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man and of mankind in its time—true art is unable *not* to be revolutionary, *not* to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society. This it must do, were it only to deliver intellectual creation from the chains that bind it, and to allow all mankind to raise itself to those heights that only isolated geniuses have achieved in the past. We recognize that only the social revolution can sweep clean the path for a new culture.

The communist revolution is not afraid of art. It realizes that the role of the artist in a decadent capitalist society is determined by the conflict between the individual and various social forms that are hostile to him. This fact alone, insofar as he is conscious of it, makes the artist the natural ally of revo-

lution. The need for emancipation felt by the individual spirit has only to follow its natural course to be led to mingle its stream with primeval necessity: the need for the emancipation of man.

The free choice of themes and the absence of all restrictions on the range of his exploitations—these are possessions that the artist has a right to claim as inalienable. In the realm of artistic creation, the imagination must escape from all constraint and must, under no pretext, allow itself to be placed under bonds. To those who urge us, whether for today or for tomorrow, to consent that art

*Woe to the nation whose literature is cut short by the intrusion of force. This is not merely interference with freedom of the press but the sealing up of a nation's heart, the excision of its memory.*

—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 1974

should submit to a discipline that we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we give a flat refusal, and we repeat our deliberate intention of standing by the formula: complete freedom for art.

In defending freedom of thought we have no intention of justifying political indifference. We believe that the supreme task of art in our epoch is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution. But the artist cannot serve the struggle for freedom unless he subjectively assimilates its social content, unless he feels in his very nerves its meaning and drama and freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art.

The aim of this appeal is to find a common ground on which may be reunited all revolutionary writers and artists, the better to serve the revolution by their art and to defend the liberty of that art itself against the usurpers of the revolution. We believe that aesthetic, philosophical, and political tendencies of the most varied sort can find here a common ground.



*Three Free Circles*, by Wassily Kandinsky, 1923.

Marxists can march here hand in hand with anarchists, provided both parties uncompromisingly reject the reactionary police-patrol spirit represented by Joseph Stalin and his henchman, García Oliver.

Every progressive tendency in art is destroyed by fascism as “degenerate.” Every free creation is called fascist by the Stalinists. Independent revolutionary art must now gather its forces for the struggle against reactionary persecution. It must proclaim aloud the right to exist. Such a union of forces is the aim of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art, which we believe it is now necessary to form.

Our aims:

The independence of art—for the revolution.

The revolution—for the complete liberation of art!

**André Breton, Diego Rivera, and Leon Trotsky,** from their Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art. In 1938 the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered to send Breton to Mexico for a lecture tour. There, with the help of Rivera, the surrealist writer met Trotsky, who had arrived in Mexico two years earlier seeking asylum from the Great Purge and was living in Rivera's house in Coyoacán under the protection of armed guards. Trotsky proposed the idea of a joint manifesto on the subject of a libertarian communist art; the result may be the only document Trotsky coauthored with anyone.



## 1837: East Boylston, MA

### MORAL BEINGS

Dear Friend,

In my last, I made a sort of running commentary upon thy views of the appropriate sphere of woman, with something like a promise that in my next, I would give thee my own.

The investigation of the rights of the slave has led me to a better understanding of my own. I have found the antislavery cause to be the high school of morals in our land—the school in which human rights are more fully investigated, and better understood and taught, than in any other. Here a great fundamental principle is uplifted and illuminated, and from this central light, rays innumerable stream all around. Human beings have rights, because they are moral beings: the rights of *all* men grow out of their moral nature; and as all men have the same moral nature, they have essentially the same rights. These rights may be wrested from the slave, but they cannot be alienated: his title to himself is as perfect now as is that of Lyman Beecher: it is stamped on his moral being and is, like it, imperishable. Now, if rights are founded in the nature of our moral being, then the mere circumstance of sex does not give to man higher rights and responsibilities than to woman. To suppose that it does would be to deny the self-evident truth that the “physical constitution is the mere instrument of the moral nature.” To suppose that it does would be to break up utterly the relations of the two natures, and to reverse their functions, exalting the animal nature into a monarch, and humbling the moral into a slave; making the former a proprietor, and the latter its property. When human beings are regarded as moral beings, sex, instead of being enthroned upon the summit, administering upon rights and responsibilities, sinks into insignificance and nothingness. My doctrine, then, is that whatever it is morally right for man to do, it is morally right for woman to do. Our duties originate not from difference of sex, but from

the diversity of our relations in life, the various gifts and talents committed to our care, and the different eras in which we live.

Thou sayest, “An ignorant, a narrow-minded, or a stupid woman cannot feel nor understand the rationality, the propriety, or the beauty of this relation”—i.e., subordination to man. Now, verily, it does appear to me that nothing but a narrow-minded view of the subject of human rights and responsibilities can induce anyone to believe in this subordination to a fallible being. Sure I am that the signs of the times clearly indicate a vast and rapid change in public sentiment on this subject. Sure I am that she is not to be, as she has been, “a mere secondhand agent” in the regeneration of a fallen world, but the acknowledged

*Let us make our own mistakes, but let us take comfort in the knowledge that they are our own mistakes.*

—Tom Mboya, 1958

equal and coworker with man in this glorious work. Then will it be seen that nothing which concerns the well-being of mankind is either beyond her sphere or above her comprehension. *Then* will it be seen “that America will be distinguished above all other nations for well-educated women, and for the influence they will exert on the general interests of society.”

That thou and all my countrywomen may better understand the true dignity of woman, is the sincere desire of

Thy friend,

**Angelina Grimké**, from a letter to Catharine Beecher. Born into a conservative plantation-owning family in Charleston, South Carolina, Grimké in 1829 followed her elder sister Sarah to Philadelphia, where she had moved in 1821. The sisters converted to Quakerism and joined the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. In 1835 Angelina wrote a letter to William Lloyd Garrison, editor of the weekly abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator*, praising his steadfastness in the face of recent proslavery riots in Boston. “The ground upon which you stand is holy ground,” she wrote. “Never—never surrender it.”

## 1929: New York City

### RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME

Adventure is the vitaminizing element in histories, both individual and social. But its story is unsuitable for a Sabbath-school prize book. Its adepts are rarely chaste, or merciful, or even law-abiding at all, and any moral peptonizing, or sugaring, takes out the interest, with the truth, of their lives.

It is so with all great characters. Their faults are not mud spots but structural outcroppings of an indivisible piece with their personality. But there is a special reason for the inveterate illegality or, if you prefer, wickedness, of your true adventurer, which is inherent in the concept of adventure itself. Adventure is the irconcilable enemy of law; the adventurer must be unsocial, if not in the deepest sense antisocial, because he is essentially a free individualist.

This is what boys—those natural judges of the matter—have been trying to mutter for centuries when fobbed off with lives of missionaries or generals where varied incidents in vain ornament an essentially unadventurous character. A feat, a danger, a surprise—these are bonbons adventure showers on those who follow her cult with a single mind. Their occurrence even repeated does not constitute a life of adventure.

Here also we renounce utterly the comfort of Mr. Kipling, who believes commuting, and soldiering in the British Army, and buying English country houses, adventurous; and Mr. Chesterton, who is certain that a long walk on Sunday and a glass of beer set one spiritually in the company of Alexander and Captain Kidd and Cagliostro. All this amicable misconception is as touching as the children's wish for a good pirate, bloodshed in which no one gets hurt, and roulette with haricot beans. Tom Sawyer knew better. The adventurer is an outlaw. Adventure must start with running away from home.

But in the mere fact that the essentially socially minded, the good, the kind, and the respectable long to adopt the adventurer, it is

clear that the opposition set between adventure and order, between the adventurer and society, is not exterior to humanity but an inner antithesis, which divides our will.

The adventurer is within us, and he contests for our favor with the social man we are obliged to be. These two sorts of life are incompatible; one we hanker after, the other we are obliged to. There is no other conflict so deep and bitter as this, whatever the pious say, for it derives from the very constitutions of human life, which so painfully separate us from all other beings. We, like the eagles, were born to be free. Yet we are obliged, in order to live at all, to make a cage of laws for ourselves and to stand on the perch. We are born as wasteful and unremorseful as tigers; we are obliged to be thrifty, or starve, or freeze. We are born to wander, and cursed to stay and dig.

*Happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on being courageous.*

—Pericles, c. 431 BC

And so the adventurous life is our first choice. Any baby that can walk is a splendid and typical adventurer; if they had the power as they have the will, what exploits and crimes would they not commit! We are born adventurers, and the love of adventures never leaves us till we are very old; old, timid men, in whose interest it is that adventure should quite die out. This is why all the poets are on one side and all the laws on the other; for laws are made by, and usually for, old men.

**William Bolitho**, from *Twelve Against the Gods*. Bolitho served as a lieutenant in the British Army during World War I. In 1916 a mine explosion trapped him in a trench with fifteen other soldiers, all of whom died. After a year in the hospital, Bolitho became a reporter for the Manchester Guardian and the New York World. He died in France at the age of thirty-nine after an operation for appendicitis. "Bolitho was a radiant person," Walter Lippmann wrote in a foreword to this book. "He did not relax by taking things for granted; he had that unremitting responsiveness which is a faculty of genius and one of its burdens."



## I420: Nara

### DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

It happens in our art that an actor who has mastered every secret and has attained the pinnacle of artistic maturity does occasionally perform in an unorthodox manner, and young actors may attempt to copy this style of performance. Yet a style that grows out of true mastery is no simple matter to imitate. Why should they try to do so?

The art that achieves Perfect Freedom requires thorough practice of the elements of the Noh appropriate to the actor's whole career, from his beginnings as a young actor through his

period of full maturity. The actor must assemble all these elements, remove their impurities, and achieve self-mastery. Such attainments are revealed in performance through the force of the actor's skills. The actor can accomplish this by mixing into his performance some of the impure elements that in years past he has learned to exclude from his art through training and practice. It may be asked why a skillful player should introduce such elements of improper style into his performance. Certainly such means constitute a strategy available only to the most experienced actors. Generally all that remains for such actors are the pure and orthodox techniques. As there are no novel elements in a perfect performance,

Kurdish soldier, Syria, 2015. Photograph by Newsha Tavakolian.



then on those occasions when the audience has become accustomed to an actor's art, the actor who is truly a master may include something unorthodox, in order to introduce again the element of novelty. Thus, in this manner, bad art can indirectly serve the cause of good art. The power of the artist's personality can thus transform impurity into purity and so make such art exciting for his audiences.

Beginning actors, of course, only see this technique as out of the ordinary and think of it as something that can be imitated; but when they do so, since their own technique is naturally insufficient, the mixing in of these unusual elements in an art based on such immature foundations is like adding brushwood to the fire of error. Such young actors doubtlessly believe that Perfect Freedom is a matter of mere technique, rather than something that grows out of the artistic maturity of the master actor. This matter must be thoroughly considered. The master actor can use such techniques with the knowledge that they are impure; but insofar as the novice mistakes them for true art and imitates them, these two ways of thinking will remain as different as black and white. And without a long development of self-mastery, how can a beginner hope to achieve a level of Perfect Freedom? Thus, when a beginner tries to imitate an actor who has reached a level of true proficiency, he will merely copy what is incorrect and will never improve. As is written in Mencius: "To achieve what one wants by following one's own desires, rather than following the Way, is like climbing a tree to find a fish." And Mencius says as well, "As for climbing a tree to find a fish, no great harm is done. But it is a great loss to follow one's will rather than the Way."

The art of an actor who has attained the highest level, by turning bad art into good, will allow him to manifest his precise meaning. A clumsy actor does not have the ability to do this. An unskilled actor, performing with the amount of artistic skill he has available to him, thinks to emulate the strength of a performance that lies beyond him. He will fail ab-



Tile with an image of a prince on horseback, Persia, second half of the nineteenth century.

solutely. This situation is just the same as the saying of Mencius that it is dangerous to try to accomplish something by using merely the means you yourself choose. Thus, if a young actor wishes to copy something beyond his ability and yet which lies within the realm of true art, there will be no great harm done even if he fails in his attempt. This is merely to climb a tree to try to find a fish. To repeat again, one must not copy the performance of an actor who has attained the highest mastery and who performs in an unorthodox fashion. Such a practice serves only as a means to seek out failure. Take careful note of this.

**Zeami**, from *The True Path to the Flower*. In 1374 the eleven-year-old Zeami took part in a Noh dance-drama for the Muromachi shogun, who was so impressed by Zeami that he immediately became a patron of the troupe and began taking him to see other performances. Zeami became head of the troupe when he was around twenty, an age he describes in *The True Path* as particularly difficult for young actors, whose natural beauty, the "temporary flower," fades around this time; they must then build a new beauty, the "true flower," through constant exercise.



## c. 62: Rome

### LAST ORDERS

It's only a short time since I was telling you I was in sight of old age. Now I'm afraid I may have left old age behind me altogether. Some other term would be more in keeping now with my years, or at least my present physical state, since old age connotes a period of decline, not debility. Put me in the list of the decrepit, the ones on the very brink! However, I congratulate myself, mind you, on the fact that my age has not, so far as I'm aware, brought any deterioration in my spirit, conscious as I am of the deterioration in my constitution. Only my vices and their accessories have decayed: the spirit is full of life, and delighted to be hav-

ing only limited dealings with the body. It has thrown off a great part of its burden. It's full of vigor, and carrying on an argument with me on the subject of old age, maintaining that these are its finest years. Let's accept what it says, and let it make the most of its blessings. It tells me to start thinking and examine how far I owe this serenity and sobriety to philosophy, and how far I owe it simply to my years, and to investigate with some care what things I really am refusing to do and what I'm simply incapable of doing—and it's prepared to accept whatever I'm really pleased to find myself incapable of doing as equivalent to refusing to do them. What cause can there be for complaint, after all, in anything that was always bound to come to an end fading gradually away? What is troubling about that? "Nothing," you may say,

*The Presentation of the Freedom of the City to General Garibaldi, by John Gilbert, c. 1864.*



## 1769: Dorchester, MA

### DANCE BREAK

August 14

Dined with 350 Sons of Liberty at the Sign of Liberty Tree in Dorchester. We had two tables laid in the open field by the barn, with between three hundred and four hundred plates, and should have spent a most agreeable day had not the rain made some abatement in our pleasures. Mr. Dickinson, the farmer's brother, and Mr. Reed, the secretary of New Jersey, were there, both cool, reserved, and guarded all day. After dinner was over and the toasts drank, we were diverted with Mr. Balch's mimicry. We had also the "Liberty Song," and the whole company joined in the chorus. This is cultivating the sensations of freedom. There was a large collection of good company. Otis and Adams are politic in promoting these festivals, for they tinge the minds of the people, they impregnate them with the sentiments of liberty. They render the people fond of their leaders in the cause, and averse and bitter against all opposers.

To the honor of the Sons, I did not see one person intoxicated, or near it.

*John Adams, from his diary. Adams referred to the Stamp Act of 1765 in his diary as "that enormous engine, fabricated by the British Parliament, for battering down all the rights and liberties of America." The following year the Sons of Liberty enlisted his support for their cause, writing to him of their concern for the "melancholy and unsettled state of Great Britain." They addressed him as "a gentleman well versed in the Constitution of your country," trusting that he would do his "utmost to oppose all measures detrimental to the welfare of it."*

"could be more troubling than the idea of our wasting and perishing away—melting out of existence, one may aptly call it, since we aren't struck down all of a sudden but worn away, every day that passes diminishing in some degree our powers." Moving to one's end through nature's own gentle process of dissolution—is there a better way of leaving life than that? Not because there is anything wrong with a sudden, violent departure, but because this gradual withdrawal is an easy route.

Anyway, here's what I do: I imagine to myself that the testing time is drawing near, that the

day that is going to see judgment pronounced on the whole of my past life has actually arrived, and I take a look at myself and address myself in these terms: "All that I've done or said up to now counts for nothing. My showing to date, besides being heavily varnished over, is of paltry value and reliability as a guarantee of my spirit. I'm going to leave it to death to settle what progress I've made. Without anxiety, then, I'm making ready for the day when the tricks and disguises will be put away and I shall come to a verdict on myself, determining whether the courageous attitudes I adopt are really felt or just so many words, and whether the defiant challenges I've hurled at fortune have been mere pretense and pantomime. Away with the world's opinion of you—it's always unsettled and divided. Away with the pursuits that have occupied the whole of your life—death is going to deliver the verdict in your case. Yes, all your debates and learned conferences, your scholarly talk and collection of maxims from the teachings of philosophers, are in no way indicative of genuine spiritual strength. Bold words come even from the timidest. It's only when you're breathing your last that the way you've spent your time will become apparent. I accept the terms, and feel no dread of the coming judgment." That's what I say to myself, but assume that I've said it to you as well. You're younger than I am, but what difference does that make? No count is taken of years. Just where death is expecting you is something we cannot know; so, for your part, expect him everywhere.

I was just intending to stop, my hand considering its closing sentence, but the accounts have still to be made out and this letter issued with its traveling expenses! You may assume that I won't be announcing the source I intend borrowing from—you know whose funds I'm drawing on. Give me a fraction more time, and payment will be made out of my own pocket. In the meantime Epicurus will oblige me, with the following saying: "Rehearse death" or—the idea may come across to us rather more satisfactorily if put in this form—"It is a very good thing





Panel embroidered with phoenixes and flowers, China, fourteenth century.

to familiarize oneself with death.” You may possibly think it unnecessary to learn something that you will only have to put into practice once. That is the very reason why we ought to be practicing it. We must continually study a thing if we are not in a position to test whether we know it. “Rehearse death.” To say this is to tell a person to rehearse his freedom. A person who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave. He is above, or at any rate beyond the reach of, all political powers. What are prisons, wardens, bars to him? He has an open door. There is but one chain holding us in fetters, and that is our love of life. There is no need to cast this love out altogether, but it does need to

be lessened somewhat so that, in the event of circumstances ever demanding this, nothing may stand in the way of our being prepared to do at once what we must do at some time or other.

**Seneca**, from *Moral Letters to Lucilius*. *Toward the end of his life, Seneca wrote works dedicated to Lucilius and other friends. In 65 Seneca's former student Nero sentenced Seneca and others accused of complicity in an assassination attempt against him to death by suicide. The philosopher made several failed attempts, including slashing his veins and ingesting hemlock, before suffocating himself in a steam bath. "The bath in which he died was an instrument of pain and loss," notes classicist Emily Wilson, "but also it was a luxury item, heated and administered by slaves, offering this elite man his final path to freedom."*







# FREE WORLD

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2017: Ann Arbor, MI

ELIZABETH ANDERSON MEETS THE BOSS

Imagine a government that assigns almost everyone a superior whom they must obey. Although superiors give most inferiors a routine to follow, there is no rule of law. Orders may be arbitrary and can change at any time, without prior notice or opportunity to appeal. Superiors are unaccountable to those they order around. They are neither elected nor removable by their inferiors. Inferiors have no right to complain in court about how they are being treated, except in a few narrowly defined cases. They also have no right to be consulted about the orders they are given.

There are multiple ranks in the society ruled by this government. The content of the orders people receive varies, depending on their rank. Higher-ranked individuals may be granted considerable freedom in deciding how to carry out their orders, and may issue some orders to some inferiors. The most highly ranked individual takes no orders but issues

many. The lowest-ranked may have their bodily movements and speech minutely regulated for most of the day.

This government does not recognize a personal or private sphere of autonomy free from sanction. It may prescribe a dress code and forbid certain hairstyles. Everyone lives under surveillance, to ensure that they are complying with orders. Superiors may snoop into inferiors' email and record their phone conversations. Suspicionless searches of their bodies and personal effects may be routine. They can be ordered to submit to medical testing. The government may dictate the language spoken and forbid communication in any other language. It may forbid certain topics of discussion. People can be sanctioned for their consensual sexual activity or for their choice of spouse or life partner. They can be sanctioned for their political activity and required to engage in political activity they do not agree with.

## c. 2550 BC: Abu Salabikh

### HOME RULE

You should not buy a prostitute: she is a mouth that bites. You should not buy a house-born slave: he is an herb that makes the stomach sick. You should not buy a free man: he will always lean against the wall. You should not buy a palace slave girl: she will always be the bottom of the barrel. You should rather bring down a foreign slave from the mountains, or you should bring somebody from a place where he is an alien, my son; then he will pour water for you where the sun rises, and he will walk before you. He does not belong to any family, so he does not want to go to his family; he does not belong to any city, so he does not want to go to his city.

**Shuruppak**, from the "Instructions of Shuruppak." *Shuruppak was the son of Ubartutu, the last antediluvian king of Sumer, who is said to have ruled the city for 18,600 years. Composed perhaps as early as 2400 BC, this document is one of the oldest examples of wisdom literature. The compilation of counsels and proverbs is addressed to Shuruppak's son, Ziusudra, who also appears in Sumerian literature as a survivor of a god-sent flood, having been counseled by the god Enki to take shelter on a large boat.*

The economic system of the society run by this government is communist. The government owns all the nonlabor means of production in the society it governs. It organizes production by means of central planning. The form of government is a dictatorship. In some cases, the dictator is appointed by an oligarchy. In other cases, the dictator is self-appointed.

Although the control that this government exercises over its members is pervasive, its sanctioning powers are limited. It cannot execute or imprison anyone for violating orders. It can demote people to lower ranks. The most common sanction is exile. Individuals are also free to emigrate, although if they do, there is usually no going back. Exile or emigration can have severe collateral consequences. The vast majority have no realistic option but to try to immigrate to another communist dictatorship, although there are many to choose from. A few

manage to escape into anarchic hinterlands, or set up their own dictatorships.

This government mostly secures compliance with carrots. Because it controls all the income in the society, it pays more to people who follow orders particularly well and promotes them to higher rank. Because it controls communication, it also has a propaganda apparatus that often persuades many to support the regime. This need not amount to brainwashing. In many cases, people willingly support the regime and comply with its orders because they identify with and profit from it. Others support the regime because, although they are subordinate to some superior, they get to exercise dominion over inferiors. It should not be surprising that support for the regime for these reasons tends to increase the more highly ranked a person is.

Would people subject to such a government be free? I expect that most people in the United States would think not. Yet most work under just such a government: it is the modern workplace, as it exists for most establishments in the United States. The dictator is the chief executive officer, superiors are managers, subordinates are workers. The oligarchy that appoints the CEO exists for publicly owned corporations: it is the board of directors. The punishment of exile is being fired. The economic system of the modern workplace is communist, because the government—that is, the establishment—owns all the assets, and the top of the establishment hierarchy designs the production plan, which subordinates execute. There are no internal markets in the modern workplace. Indeed, the boundary of the firm is defined as the point at which markets end and authoritarian centralized planning and direction begin.

Most workers in the United States are governed by communist dictatorships in their work lives. Usually, those dictatorships have the legal authority to regulate workers' outside lives as well—their political activities, speech, choice of sexual partner, use of recreational drugs, alcohol, smoking, and exercise. Because most employers exercise this off-hours author-





Mishima Pass in Kai Province, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, by Hokusai, c. 1830.

ity irregularly, arbitrarily, and without warning, most workers are unaware of how sweeping it is. Most believe, for example, that their boss cannot fire them for their off-hours Facebook postings, or for supporting a political candidate their boss opposes. Yet only about half of U.S. workers enjoy even partial protection of their off-duty speech from employer meddling. Far fewer enjoy legal protection of their speech on the job, except in narrowly defined circumstances. Even where they are entitled to legal protection, as in speech promoting union activity, their legal rights are often a virtual dead letter because of lax enforcement: employers determined to keep out unions immediately fire workers who dare mention them, and the costs of litigation make it impossible for workers to hold them accountable for this.

I expect that this description of the communist dictatorships in our midst—pervasively governing our lives, often to a far greater de-

gree of control than the state—would be deeply surprising to most people. Certainly many U.S. CEOs who think of themselves as libertarian individualists would be surprised to see themselves depicted as dictators of little communist governments. Why do we not recognize such a pervasive part of our social landscape for what it is? Should we not subject these forms of government to at least as much critical scrutiny as we pay to the democratic state?

*From Private Government. Anderson studied political philosophy under John Rawls at Harvard and later joined the faculty of the University of Michigan. In 2013 she was asked to name her own professorship at the university; she chose to honor John Dewey, whom she admired for his emphasis on “the ways society ought to be organized, rather than personal decisions of the individual.” Later in this book Anderson criticizes the “open-ended authority of managers,” noting that “efficient employment contracts” can never “specify precisely everything a worker might be asked to do.”*

## 1936: Bombay

### PREDESTINATION

It is a pity that caste even today has its defenders. The defenses are many. It is defended on the ground that the caste system is but another name for the division of labor; and if division of labor is a necessary feature of every civilized society, then it is argued that there is nothing wrong with the caste system. The first thing that is to be urged against this view is that the caste system is not merely a division of labor. It is also a division of laborers. Civilized society undoubtedly needs the division of labor. But in no civilized society is it accompanied by this unnatural

*I don't believe you can stand for freedom for one group of people and deny it to others.*

—Coretta Scott King, 1994

division of laborers into watertight compartments. The caste system is not merely a division of laborers—which is quite different from the division of labor—it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of laborers are graded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labor accompanied by this gradation of laborers.

This division of labor is not spontaneous; it is not based on natural aptitudes. Social and individual efficiency requires us to develop the capacity of an individual to the point of competency to choose and to make his own career. This principle is violated in the caste system, insofar as it involves an attempt to appoint tasks to individuals in advance—selected not on the basis of trained original capacities but on that of the social status of the parents.

This stratification of occupations which is the result of the caste system is positively pernicious. Industry is never static. It undergoes rapid and abrupt changes. With such changes, an individual must be free to change his occupation. Without such freedom to adjust himself to changing circumstances, it would be impossible for him to gain his livelihood. The caste system

will not allow Hindus to take to occupations where they are wanted, if they do not belong to them by heredity. If a Hindu is seen to starve rather than take to new occupations not assigned to his caste, the reason is to be found in the caste system. By not permitting readjustment of occupations, caste becomes a direct cause of much of the unemployment we see in the country.

The caste system suffers from another serious defect. The division of labor brought about by the system is not a division based on choice. Individual sentiment, individual preference, has no place in it. It is based on the dogma of predestination. Considerations of social efficiency would compel us to recognize that the greatest evil in the industrial system is not so much poverty and the suffering that it involves, as the fact that so many persons have callings which make no appeal to those who are engaged in them. Such callings constantly provoke one to aversion, ill will, and the desire to evade.

There are many occupations in India which, on account of the fact that they are regarded as degraded by the Hindus, provoke those who are engaged in them to aversion. There is a constant desire to evade and escape from such occupations, which arises solely because of the blighting effect which they produce upon those who follow them, owing to the slight and stigma cast upon them by the Hindu religion. What efficiency can there be in a system under which neither men's hearts nor their minds are in their work? As an economic organization, caste is therefore a harmful institution, inasmuch as it involves the subordination of man's natural powers and inclinations to the exigencies of social rules.

**B.R. Ambedkar**, from *The Annihilation of Caste*. At a Round Table Conference in London in 1931, Ambedkar advocated for a separate electorate for lower castes in India, a privilege that was later granted to Muslims and Sikhs. Gandhi insisted that dividing Hinduism would divide India and began a hunger strike in protest. Ambedkar called this "the worst form of coercion" against people who were "tied" to a religion that "brands them as lepers." In 1956, shortly before his death, Ambedkar publicly converted to Buddhism along with nearly 400,000 followers.



## 1649: London

### THE KING'S SPEECH

Having already made my protestations not only against the illegality of this pretended court but also that no earthly power can justly call me (who am your king) in question as a delinquent, I would not any more open my mouth upon this occasion more than to refer myself to what I have spoken, were I in this case alone concerned, but the duty I owe to God in the preservation of the true liberty of my people will not suffer me at this time to be silent. For how can any freeborn subject of England call life or anything he possesses his own if power without right daily makes new and abrogates the old fundamental ways of the land, which I now take to be the present case?

And admitting, but not granting, that the people of England's commission could grant your pretended power, I see nothing you can show for that; for certainly you never asked the question of the tenth man in the kingdom,

and in this way you manifestly wrong even the poorest plowman if you demand not his free consent; nor can you pretend any color for this, your pretended commission, without the consent at least of the major part of every man in England of whatsoever quality or condition, which I am sure you never went about to seek, so far are you from having it. Thus you see that I speak not for my own right alone, as I am your king, but also for the true liberty of all my subjects, which consists not in the power of government but in living under such laws, such a government, as may give themselves the best assurance of their lives and property of their goods. Nor in this must or do I forget the privileges of both houses of Parliament, which this day's proceedings do not only violate but likewise occasion the greatest breach of their public faith that (I believe) ever was heard of—with which I am far from charging the two houses: for all the pretended crimes laid against me bear dates long before this treaty at Newport, in which I, having concluded as much as in me lay, and hopefully expecting the houses'

*1807, Friedland (detail), by Ernest Meissonier, 1875.*





*Proclamation of the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies, April 27, 1848, by François-Auguste Biard, 1849.*

agreement thereunto, I was suddenly surprised and hurried from thence as a prisoner, upon which account I am against my will brought hither, where since I am come, I cannot but, to my power, defend the ancient laws and liberties of this kingdom, together with my own just right. Then, for anything I can see, the higher house is totally excluded. And for the House of Commons, it is too well known that the major part of them are detained or deterred from sitting; so as, if I had no other, this were sufficient for me to protest against the lawfulness of your pretended court. Besides all this, the peace of the kingdom is not the least in my thoughts; and what hopes of settlement is there, so long as power reigns without rule or law, changing the whole frame of that government, under which this kingdom hath flourished for many hundred years? (Nor will I say what will fall out, in case this lawless, unjust proceeding against me does go on.) And believe it, the commons of England will not thank you for this change; for they will remember how happy they have been of late years under the reigns of Queen Elizabeth, the king my father, and myself, until the beginning of these unhappy troubles, and

will have cause to doubt that they shall never be so happy under any new. And by this time it will be too sensibly evident that the arms I took up were only to defend the fundamental laws of this kingdom against those who have supposed my power hath totally changed the ancient government.

Thus having showed you briefly the reasons why I cannot submit to your pretended authority without violating the trust which I have from God for the welfare and liberty of my people, I expect from you either clear reasons to convince my judgment, showing me that I am in an error—and then truly I will answer—or that you will withdraw your proceedings.

**Charles I**, from *"The King's Reasons for Declining the Jurisdiction of the High Court of Justice."* A believer in the divine right of kings, Charles often clashed with the House of Commons. In early 1647 parliamentary forces placed him under house arrest, which he attempted to evade through secret negotiations with Scotland. After England defeated Scotland at the Battle of Preston, Charles was put on trial as "the grand author of our troubles." He was beheaded in January 1649, declaring before his execution that "for the people... I desire their liberty and freedom as much as anybody," but "their liberty and freedom consists in having government."



## 1980: Bulawayo

### CUPPED LIKE WATER

The young women abandon their age-mates who are afraid to be with them in quiet places, and who insist on meeting at the bus station and in the presence of their protective mothers. These young women approach Thandabantu Store with a new and purposeful gaiety. They do all they can to discover what their own harrowing impatience is about, and can it be halted, somehow? Can it be stilled and satisfied? Freely and willingly, they slide beside men as old as their oldest brothers, who have returned home from the war with all their senses intact, except for that faraway, traveled look that makes the girls a bit fearful, a bit dizzy, a bit excited, that makes them feel brave, as though they are sliding their hands in the cotton-soft coolness of ash, where, it is possible, a flame might sparkle and burn. These solid men suddenly in their midst make their mothers mist, tearful with the wonder of their safe return. They are here. They wear lonely and lost looks but have a touch wild as honey. Their arms and hair are washed with leaves of mint. They refuse neat portions of Lifebuoy and Lux soap bought especially for them from Thandabantu Store and wash their bodies with herbs from the hills, from the river, like modest beings. They guard their loneliness. Their shoulders glow with the last rays of the sun. The women worship these men who lead them all the way to that final place they want to be and which has long been in their minds.

These women, lively and impatient, have secured a freedom that makes their voices glow. They know everything there is to know about anything there is to know, and have tasted their own freedom mature, because it is truly theirs, this freedom. They have not misunderstood. They hold that freedom in their arms. With imaginations unencumbered, they will have children called Happiness, called Prosperity, called Fortune, called True Love,

called More Blessing, called Joy, called Cease-fire. Why not? The names will cascade like histories from their tongues...Beauty, Courage, and Freedom. All their children will be conceived out of this moment of emancipation. Born into their arms like revelations, like flowers opening. It will be necessary to give their offspring middle names that will provide them strength...Masotsha, Mandla, and Nqabutho. Names to anchor dreams.

These women are the freest women on earth, with no pretense, just joy coursing through their veins. They have no desire to be owned, hedged in, claimed, but to be appreciated, to be loved till an entire sun sets, to be adored like doves. They want only to be held

*When a man says that he is Jesus or Napoleon, or that the Martians are after him, or claims something else that seems outrageous to common sense, he is labeled psychotic and locked up in a madhouse. Freedom of speech is only for normal people.*

—Thomas Szasz, 1973

like something too true to be believed. They want to know an absolute joy with men who carry that lost look in their eyes—the men who walk awkward-like, lost-like, as though the earth is shaking under their feet, not at all like what the women imagine heroes to be; these men who have a hard time looking straight at a woman for a whole two minutes without closing their own eyes or looking away; who smile harmless smiles, which make the women weak at the knees and cause them to fold their arms over their heads...

The women who return from the bush arrive with a superior claim of their own. They define the world differently. They are fighters, simply, who pulled down every barrier and entered the bush, yes, like men. But then they were women and said so, and spoke so. They made admissions that resembled denials.

They do not apologize for their courage and long absence, nor hide or turn away from the footpath. These women understand much

better than any of the young women who have spent their entire lives along the Kwakhe River ever could understand about anything or anyone, and they tell them so, not with words, but they let them know fully and well; they let them speculate, let them wonder what those silent lips are about, what those arms, swinging from hip to shoulder, are about.

These women wear their camouflage long after the cease-fire, walking through Kezi with their heavy bound boots, their clothing a motif of rock and tree, and their long sleeves folded up along the wrist. They wear black berets, sit on the ledge at Thandabantu Store, and throw their arms across their folded knees. They purse their lips and whistle, and toss bottle tops and catch them, and juggle corn husks, which they toss at the young boys,

who leap to catch them before they touch the ground. They close their eyes and tuck their berets into the pockets along their legs, button them up, and forget them. From this high plateau, they watch the young women who think freedom can be held in the hand, cupped like water, sipped like destinies. Who think that water can wash clean any wound and banish scars as dry as Kwakhe sand. These women whose only miracle is to watch water being swallowed by the Nyande River after the rain, if it rains, and who mistake the porous sands of Nyande for the substance of their laughter, their reckless joy, their gifts. These young women who possess intact and undisturbed histories, who without setting one foot past the Kwakhe River think they can cure all the loneliness in a man's arms, hold him, till he

## 1879: Washington, DC

### NEW DEAL

If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian, he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give them all the same law. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. All men were made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it. (You might as well expect the rivers to run backward as that any man who was born a free man should be contented when penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases.) If you tie a horse to a stake, do you expect he will grow fat? If you pen an Indian up on a small spot of earth, and compel him to stay there, he will not be contented, nor will he grow and prosper. (I have asked some of the great white chiefs where they get their authority to say to the Indian that he shall stay in one place while he sees white men going where they please. They cannot tell me.)

I only ask of the government to be treated as all other men are treated. If I cannot go to my own home, let me have a home in some country where my people will not die so fast. I would like to go to Bitterroot Valley. There my people would be healthy; where they are now they are dying. Three have died since I left my camp to come to Washington. When

I think of our condition, my heart is heavy. I see men of my race treated as outlaws and driven from country to country, or shot down like animals.

I know that my race must change. We cannot hold our own with the white man as we are. We only ask an even chance to live as other men live. We ask to be recognized as men. We ask that the same law shall work alike on all men. If the Indian breaks the law, punish him by the law. If the white man breaks the law, punish him also.

Let me be a free man—free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself—and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty.

**Chief Joseph**, from *An Indian's View of Indian Affairs*. "In 1877 Chief Joseph led a Nez Percé group resisting resettlement on a three-month trek toward Canada, fighting thirteen battles along the way. By the time the group surrendered, forty miles south of their destination, half of its members had died. "I want to have time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find," Joseph said as he surrendered. Over the next three decades, he met with three American presidents to appeal for his tribe's return to the Wallowa Valley in Oregon but did not succeed before his death in 1904.





Freedom of the Press, France, c. 1792.

is as free as the day he was born, till he cannot remember counting the stars overhead, counting each star till he is out of breath and ready to hold his own screaming voice in his hands, to fight. With their immaculate thighs and their tender voices and unblemished skin, they will make a new sun rise and set, so that yesterday is forgotten. Time can begin here, in their arms...

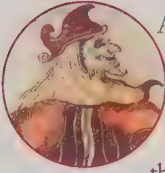
They stay in their camouflage and pull out cigarettes and smoke while standing under the marula tree. They hold their faces up and seem amused either by the sky or by passersby—their mothers. They walk leisurely to Thandabantu Store, slowly, as though they have a lifetime to consider what independence is all about, a lifetime to place one foot after another, a lifetime to send a ring of laughter past the wing of a

bird. They have no haste or hurry, no urgent, harrowing hunger to satisfy, no torment they would rather not forget. Independence is a respite from war; the mind may just rearrange itself to a comfortable resolution, without haste, at the pace of each day unfolding and ending naturally, and opening again like a flower.

**Yvonne Vera**, from *The Stone Virgins*. Vera studied at York University in Toronto, earning her PhD in English literature in 1995. She later returned to her native city of Bulawayo to work as regional director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, installing local folk art and organizing workshops for women and children. "When I'm writing," she said in 2000, "I take this series of images, and I put them on my desk, so to speak, as I write. This moment, frozen like that, is so powerful that I can't lose sight of it, visually or emotionally. From it, I develop the whole story."

## As Free as the Gods

*Liberation tropes in world mythology*



As punishment for his role in the death of the god Balder, the Norse gods imprison **Loki** in a cave, bind him with the entrails of his son, and torment him with a venomous serpent. The thirteenth-century Icelandic poet Snorri Sturluson writes that Loki will lie bound until Ragnarök, the final destruction of gods and humans.



### A Long Imprisonment

In a tenth-century Zoroastrian text, the hero **Thraitauna** tries to kill the tyrannical three-headed serpentine demon **Azhi Dahaka**, but scorpions and snakes crawl out of Dahaka's wounds. To avoid contaminating the world with the creatures, Thraitauna traps Dahaka beneath a volcano forever.



The fourth-century Roman grammarian Servius describes an ancient grove situated thirty-five miles from Rome that was consecrated to **Feronia**, a Sabine goddess of freedom who was especially popular among freedmen and freedwomen. In the sanctuary was a stone seat inscribed LET WELL-DESERVING SLAVES SIT AND ARISE FREE.



### The Promise of Freedom

In the Book of Exodus, an Egyptian pharaoh enslaves the Israelites living in his kingdom. Their God, **Yahweh**, sends Moses to negotiate their manumission. The pharaoh refuses until a plague sent by Yahweh kills his oldest son. Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt; after wandering in the wilderness for forty years, they conquer a portion of Canaan.



In a folktale of the Akan-speaking peoples of West Africa, trickster spider **Ananse** gathers earthly wisdom in a gourd, which he hangs from a tree. When he realizes some knowledge has escaped, Ananse empties the gourd, giving wisdom to the people gathered beneath him.



### Liberator of Knowledge

The mythology of the Karuk tribe of California recounts how **Coyote** brought them fire after stealing it from a group of mountain dwellers. Concealing a piece of bark between his toes, he lights it on one of their fires and, before it burns out, carries it down the mountain with the help of a relay team of swift animals.



The ten-headed demon Ravana abducts **Sita**, the divine consort of the god Rama, and confines her to a secret garden in the fourth-century-BC *Ramayana*. Hoping to rescue his wife, Rama pursues and kills Ravana in battle. When Rama doubts Sita's faithfulness during her time with Ravana, she demands to undergo a trial by fire and emerges unscathed.



### A Narrow Escape

In the eighth-century *Kojiki*, the Shinto deity **Izanami** dies while giving birth to a fire god. Her brother (and husband) **Izanagi** follows her to Yomi, the land of the dead. Lighting a torch to guide their escape, he sees that Izanami is now a maggot-infested corpse. Pursued by his enraged sister, Izanagi flees and seals the entrance to Yomi with a boulder.





## c. 1949: New York City

### FREEDOM

Freedom will not come  
Today, this year  
Nor ever  
Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right  
As the other fellow has  
To stand  
On my two feet  
And own land.

I tire so of hearing people say,  
*Let things take their course.*  
*Tomorrow is another day.*  
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.  
I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.  
Freedom  
Is a strong seed  
Planted  
In a great need.  
I live here, too.  
I want freedom  
Just as you.

**Langston Hughes**, from *The Panther and the Lash*. Hughes' second book, *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, was criticized by other Black writers for its abject portrayal of Black life; Hughes later recalled that it had been denounced as "a disgrace to the race, a return to the dialect tradition, and a parading of all our racial defects before the public." He wrote that he tried to concern his poetry with "workers, roustabouts, and singers, and job hunters on Lenox Avenue." These were the "so-called common element," he argued, whom he would stand with against the "smug Negro middle class."

## 1762: Montmorency

### HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains. There are some who may believe themselves masters of others, and are no less enslaved than they. How has this change come about? I do not know. How can it be made legitimate? That is a question which I believe I can resolve.

The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural, is the family. Even in this case, the bond between children and father persists only so long as they have need of him for their conservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved. The children are released from the obedience they owe to their father, the father is released from the duty of care to the children, and all become equally independent. If they continue to remain living together, it is not by nature but voluntarily, and the family itself is maintained only through convention.

This shared freedom is a result of man's nature. His first law is his own conservation; his first cares are owed to himself. As soon as he reaches the age of reason, he alone is the judge of how best to look after himself, and thus he becomes his own master.

If we wish, then, the family may be regarded as the first model of political society: the leader corresponds to the father, the people to the children, and all being born free and equal, none alienates his freedom except for reasons of utility. The sole difference is that, in the family, the father is paid for the care he takes of his children by the love he bears them, while in the state this love is replaced by the pleasure of being in command, the chief having no love for his people.

If, says Grotius, an individual is able to transfer his liberty, and become the slave of a master, why should an entire nation not transfer its liberty and become subject to a king? Here we have several equivocal words that need elucidation, but let us keep to the term

Algerians celebrating independence from France, Algiers, 1962. Photograph by Marc Riboud.





## c. 312 BC: Qi

### WORK STUDY

"You must return to fundamentals," said Mencius. "If you were renowned for humane government, every scholar under heaven would long to stand in your court, every farmer would long to plow in your countryside, every merchant would long to trade in your markets, every traveler would long to travel your roads, and everyone beneath heaven who despised their rulers would long to rush here and confide in you. If you made this happen, who could resist it?"

"I'm not all that bright," said Emperor Xuan of Qi. "I still can't see my way through this. But I'm determined and want your help. If you'll explain clearly, perhaps I can learn, and even though I'm not terribly clever, I'll try to act on your counsel."

"To keep the mind constant without a constant livelihood—only the wisest among us can do that. Unless they have a constant livelihood, the common people will never have constant minds. And without constant minds, they'll wander loose and wild. They'll stop at nothing, and soon cross the law. Then, if you punish them accordingly, you've done nothing but snare the people in your own trap. And if they're humane, how can those in high positions snare their people in traps? Therefore, in securing the people's livelihood, an enlightened ruler ensures that they have enough to serve their parents and nurture their wives and children, that everyone has plenty to eat in good years and no one starves in bad years. If you do that, you'll be leading the people toward virtue and benevolence, so it will be easy for them to follow you.

*transfer.* To transfer is to give or to sell. A man who becomes the slave of another does not give himself: he sells himself, in exchange, at the very least, for his subsistence. But in exchange for what does a nation sell itself? A king, far from providing subsistence to his subjects, takes it all from them, and as Rabelais says, a king doesn't live cheaply. So will his subjects give him their persons on condition that he will take their property also? I cannot see what they still have to keep.

"But now, with you securing their livelihood, the people never have enough to serve their parents or nurture their wives and children. In good years they live miserable lives, and in bad years they starve to death. All they can do is struggle to stay free of death and worry about failing. Where could they ever find the leisure for ritual and duty?"

"If you want to put my words into practice, why not return to fundamentals? When every five-acre farm has mulberry trees around the farmhouse, people wear silk at fifty. And when the proper seasons of chickens and pigs and dogs are not neglected, people eat meat at seventy. When hundred-acre farms never violate their proper seasons, even large families don't go hungry. Pay close attention to the teaching in village schools, and extend it to the child's family responsibilities—then, when their silver hair glistens, people won't be out on roads and paths hauling heavy loads. Our black-haired people free of hunger and cold, wearing silk and eating meat in old age—there have never been such times without a true emperor."

*Mencius, from the Mencius. Born in Zou in present-day Shandong, Mencius is believed to have grown up in poverty after his father's early death. According to a legend, Mencius' mother moved them three times in order to provide better educational opportunities for him. He studied Confucianism under a grandson of Confucius, and later traveled among different states to advise on public policy, eventually serving as an official in Qi. He resigned his post after the Qi government invaded Yan and refused to implement any of his recommended reforms.*

It will be objected that a despot ensures civil peace for his subjects. Very well; but what do they gain thereby, if the wars that his ambition brings down on them, his insatiable greed, and the troubles inflicted by his administrators plague them more sorely than their dissensions would? What do they gain thereby, if civil peace itself is a source of misery? Prisoners live peacefully in their dungeons; is that enough for them to feel comfortable there? The Greek captives in the cave of the Cyclops

lived there peacefully while awaiting their turn to be devoured.

To renounce our freedom is to renounce our character as men, the rights, and even the duties, of humanity. No compensation is possible for anyone who renounces everything. It is incompatible with the nature of man; to remove the will's freedom is to remove all morality from our actions. Finally, a convention is vain and contradictory if it stipulates absolute authority on one side and limitless obedience on the other. Is it not obvious that we have no obligations toward a person from whom we can demand anything, and that this condition,

*Those who would give up essential liberty  
to purchase a little temporary safety deserve  
neither liberty nor safety.*

—Benjamin Franklin, 1755

requiring nothing in return or exchange, is enough to render the covenant null? For what right can my slave have against me, since everything he has belongs to me? His rights being mine, a right of mine against myself is a word without a meaning.

If a series of men, in succession, are made to submit to one other man, all I can see in them is a master with his slaves, however many of them there may be; I cannot see a people and its leader. It could be said to be an aggregation, but it is not an association; there is no public good, no body politic. The one man, even if he were to have subjugated half the world, is still only an individual; his self-interest, separate from that of the rest, is still only a private interest. If this same man comes to his end, his empire after him is scattered and dissolved, as an oak breaks up and falls into a heap of ashes after being consumed by fire.

A people, says Grotius, can give itself to a king. A people is a people, therefore, according to Grotius, before it gives itself to a king. The gift itself is a civil act, and assumes some public deliberation. Hence it would be as well, before we examine the act by which a people elects a

king, to examine the act by which a people is a people. For this act is necessarily anterior to the other, and is the true foundation of society.

For if there were no prior covenant, where would the obligation be (if the election were not unanimous) for the minority to submit to the choice of the majority, and how could it be right for the votes of a hundred who wanted a master to be binding on ten who did not? The law of the majority vote itself establishes a covenant, and assumes that on one occasion at least there has been unanimity.

I make the assumption that there is a point in the development of mankind at which the obstacles to men's self-preservation in the state of nature are too great to be overcome by the strength that any one individual can exert in order to maintain himself in this state. The original state can then subsist no longer, and the human race would perish if it did not change its mode of existence.

Now, because men cannot generate new strength, but only unify and control the forces already existing, the sole means they still have of preserving themselves is to create, by combination, a totality of forces sufficient to overcome the obstacles resisting them, to direct their operation by a single impulse, and make them act in unison.

The totality of forces can be formed only by the collaboration of a number of persons. But each man's strength and freedom being the main instruments of his preservation, how can he commit them to others without harming himself, and without neglecting the duty of care to himself?

The difficulty as it relates to my subject may be defined in the following terms: "Find a form of association that will defend and protect, with the whole of its joint strength, the person and property of each associate, and under which each of them, uniting himself to all, will obey himself alone, and remain as free as before." This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract gives the answer.

Properly understood, the clauses can all be reduced to one alone—namely, the complete



transfer of each associate, with all his rights, to the whole community. For in the first place, each giving himself completely, the condition is the same for all; and the condition being the same for all, none has any interest in making it burdensome to the others.

Further, the transfer being carried out unreservedly, the union between the associates is as perfect as it can be, and none of them has

any further requirements to add. For if individuals retained some rights, there being no common superior to give judgment between them and the public, each would make his own judgment on certain points, and would soon aspire to do so on all of them: the state of nature would remain in force, and the association would become, necessarily, either tyrannical or meaningless.

*Allegorical Emblem of the Treaty of Rijswijk, northern Netherlands, 1697.*





*Drunken Silenus*, by Jusepe de Ribera, 1628.

Finally, each in giving himself to all gives himself to none, and since there are no associates over whom he does not acquire the same rights as he cedes, he gains the equivalent of all that he loses, and greater strength for the conservation of what he possesses.

If therefore we set aside everything that is not essential to the social pact, we shall find that it may be reduced to the following terms: "Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and we as a body receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole."

Immediately this act of association produces, in place of the individual persons of every contracting party, a moral and collective body, which is composed of as many members

as there are votes in the assembly, and which, by the same act, is endowed with its unity, its common self, its life, and its will. The public person that is formed in this way by the union of all the others once bore the name *city*, and now bears that of *republic* or *body politic*.

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**, from *The Social Contract*. When shipments of this book were barred from entry into France in 1762, Rousseau's publisher advised the Swiss philosopher to republish it anonymously. Rousseau declined, insisting that the book contained "nothing that I should refuse to acknowledge." The following month, *The Social Contract* was placed on trial in Paris; its ideas, the prosecutor declared, "would render freedom even more crushing than servitude" and "can only be regarded as a kind of delirium; yet such extreme freedom is the deity of the author."



## C. 1350: Sonian Forest

### CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Whoever wishes to win and to keep virtues must adorn and possess and rule over his soul as if it were a kingdom. Free will is king in the soul, which is itself by nature free and yet more free by grace. And it shall be crowned with a crown called charity. And the crown and the kingdom we shall receive, possess, rule, and maintain from the emperor, who is lord and commander and king of kings. This king, free will, shall dwell in the highest city of the kingdom, which is the power of the soul to desire. And he shall be adorned and clad in a parti-color robe: on the right side with a divine gift called fortitude, so that he may be strong and mighty to overcome every hindrance, and to sojourn in heaven in the palace of the supreme emperor, and in love to incline his crowned head before the king most high, upon whom all his desire is centered: that is the proper work of charity, and in doing it a man adorns his crown, and doing that he receives his crown and maintains his kingdom and possesses it eternally. The left side of the robe shall be a cardinal virtue called moral fortitude. By that virtue shall free will, this king, suppress all immorality and foster all virtue, and possess in power his kingdom until the day of his death. This king shall appoint counselors in his land, and they shall be the wisest of the land. The counselors shall be these two divine virtues, knowledge and discretion, illumined with the light of the grace of God. They shall dwell nearest to the king, in a palace called the reasoning power of the soul. And they shall be clad and adorned with a moral virtue called moderation, so that the king may always act, or refrain from acting, upon good counsel. By means of knowledge a man shall purge his conscience of all faults, and adorn it with all virtues: and with moderation a man shall give and take, shall do and let alone, be silent and speak, fast and eat, hear and answer, and act in all things according to knowledge and discretion, clad in a

moral virtue called temperance or moderation. This king, the free will, shall also establish in his kingdom a judge, who shall be righteousness. This is a divine virtue, since it proceeds from love, and it is also the highest moral virtue. This judge shall dwell in the disposition, in the middle of the kingdom, in the power of the soul for anger. And he shall be adorned with a moral virtue called prudence. For righteousness cannot be perfect without prudence. This judge, righteousness, shall journey through

*Anarchism, then, really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraints of government.*

—Emma Goldman, 1910

the kingdom invested with the power and might of the king, and with the wisdom of the council, and with his own prudence. And he shall appoint and dismiss, judge and condemn, have power of life and death, maim, blind and make to see, raise up and cast down, and ordain all things in accordance with justice: and he shall scourge and chastise and deny every vice. The commoners of this kingdom, who are all the powers of the soul, shall be established in humility and in godly fear, submissive to God and to all virtues, each power according to its aptitude. He who thus possesses and guards the kingdom of his soul and has set it in order has gone out with love and virtue to God and to himself and to his fellow Christian.

**Jan van Ruysbroeck**, from *The Spiritual Espousals*. Born near Brussels in 1293, Ruysbroeck went to live with his uncle, a canon at the church of Saint Gudula, around the age of eleven. Ruysbroeck was ordained in 1317 and spent the next twenty-six years at the church, leaving in 1343 to establish an Augustinian monastery called Groenendaal Priory. In his fifteenth-century biography of Ruysbroeck, the Dutch canon Henricus Pomerius described him as "composed and quiet, dressed poorly, but dignified in his bearing. He walked the streets alone...he enjoyed the rest of contemplation more than outward activities."



*Finish—First International Race for America's Cup, August 8, 1870 (detail), by Samuel Colman, 1870.*

## 1960: New York City

### CROSSCURRENTS

Whether I enjoy freedom or suffer the reverse depends upon my intercourse with my fellow men and not on my intercourse with myself. Men can only *be* free with reference to one another, only, that is, in the fields of politics and of the things they do; it is only in these spheres that they come to realize that freedom is something positive and not merely a negation of compulsion.

It is not possible to speak of political government without speaking of freedom; nor is it possible to talk about freedom without talking about political government. Where communal existence is not organized politically—as, for example, among primitive tribes or in the private sphere of family life—it is not freedom, but force of circumstance and self-interest that bind men together; and wherever the world is not the scene of political activity—as, for example, in a despotically ruled community, in which the members are banished into the corners of their own private homes—freedom is no mundane reality. If there existed no politically guaranteed

public field of activity, freedom could find no place in the world, and even though it always and in all circumstances dwells as a longing in the hearts of men, it is not demonstrably positive. In terms of positive reality, political government and freedom are linked together and are to each other as are the two halves of a single thing.

Today, however, we do not accept as a matter of course this juxtaposition of politics and freedom—and for very good reasons. Since we have become acquainted with the totalitarian form of despotism, we have, in general terms, come to the conclusion that nothing is more likely to banish freedom completely and for all time than the subordination of our whole lives to the sphere of politics. In the light of recent experience, which, of course, must remain ever present in our minds when we consider questions of this nature, it is only natural that we should not only query the existence of any connection between politics and freedom, but should also ask ourselves whether, indeed, the two are in any way compatible, whether freedom only starts to exist where political control ceases to function, so that, if there be no end to politics, there will be no boundaries within the confines of which politics



must stay, and then there can be no more freedom in the world. The less we have of politics, it would appear, the more liberty we will enjoy; and the smaller the sphere occupied by politics, the greater will be the sphere in which freedom will flourish. And so today we have quite naturally come to measure the degree of freedom enjoyed by any community by the extent of the liberty accorded in spheres of activity that are regarded as nonpolitical, such as commerce and industry, the academic world, and the religious, cultural, and intellectual spheres. We feel that politics are compatible with freedom only so far as they are able to guarantee freedom from the influence and control of politics.

## 1967: Toronto

### THE STORM WILL NOT ABATE

It is a shattering historical irony that the American Revolution of 1776 was the consequence of many of the same conditions that prevail today. King George adamantly refused to share power even in modest degree with the colonies. He provoked violence by scorning and spurning the appeals embodied in nonviolent protests such as boycotts, peaceful demonstrations, and petitions. In their resort to violence the colonists were pressed ideologically beyond their original demands and put into question the system of absolute monarchical rule. When they took up arms and searched for the rationale for independence they broke with all traditions of imperial domination and established a unique and unprecedented form of government—the democratic republic.

The Negro revolt is evolving into more than a quest for desegregation and equality. It is a challenge to a system that has created miracles of production and technology to create justice. If humanism is locked outside the system, Negroes will have revealed its inner core of despotism and a far greater struggle for liberation will unfold. The United States is substantially challenged to demonstrate that it can abolish not only the evils of racism but the scourge of poverty of whites as well as of Negroes and the horrors of war that transcend national borders and involve all of mankind.

The first man to die in the American Revolution was a Negro seaman, Crispus

For the state, which, since the beginning of the modern era, has been closely identified with the whole process of political government, has since then always been regarded as the authority upon which devolved the duty of safeguarding not the freedom but the way of life and the vital interests of the community and each individual member of it. Here again, security is the decisive criterion, but the thing that this security is called upon to safeguard is not so much freedom but rather the opportunity to lead one's own life, free from interference. This latter has nothing to do with security, in the proper sense of the word; it is, rather, an urge that is inherent in human nature. Freedom

Attucks. Before that fateful struggle ended, the institution of absolute monarchy was put on its deathbed.

We may now be in only the initial period of an era of change as far-reaching in its consequences as the American Revolution. The developed industrial nations of the world—which include Canada, as much as the United States—cannot remain secure islands of prosperity in a seething sea of poverty. The storm is rising against the privileged minority of the earth, from which there is no shelter in isolation and armament. The storm will not abate until a just distribution of the fruits of the earth enables man everywhere to live in dignity and human decency. The American Negro of 1967, like Crispus Attucks, may be the vanguard in a prolonged struggle that may change the shape of the world, as billions of deprived shake and transform the earth in their quest for life, freedom, and justice.

**Martin Luther King Jr.**, from *"Impasse in Race Relations,"* one of King's Massey Lectures, broadcast on Canadian radio. "Deep in our history of struggle for freedom Canada was the North Star," King said in his remarks. After riots in Detroit and Newark earlier that year, Janet Somerville, a producer at the CBC, had written King that "anything implied by the question 'Is it human to hope to move forward without violence?' is relevant to the series we would like to broadcast." King accepted her invitation to deliver these lectures in November 1967; he was fatally shot in Memphis less than five months later.

thus becomes a limiting factor and marks the boundaries beyond which political activity may not go, unless, of course, life itself and all its vital interests and requirements stand in jeopardy.

It is thus not only our own generation, whose mistrust of political government has so often been deepest at just the time when freedom has been the subject of our gravest concern, but also the whole of the modern era that have drawn a distinction between freedom and political government. Nevertheless, I am sure my readers felt, when I said that the ultimate aim of political government was freedom, I was putting

*We who officially value freedom of speech above life itself seem to have nothing to talk about but the weather.*

—Barbara Ehrenreich, 1991

into words something that they had all known and accepted long ago. There are both historical and objective grounds for this assertion. On the historical side there is the quite astonishing fact that not one of all our Western languages has a word for politics that conforms to the original meaning of the Greek word *polis*. It is not only etymologically and not only for savants that this word is steeped in associations emanating from that human community in which politics, in its specific meaning, were first discovered. It is thanks to this manner of speech and to these associations that, no matter how far we may have moved from the original concept of *polis*, there is one all-important tenet of this school of political thought that we have never abandoned and upon which all the statesmen and all the theorists of the Western world are agreed—namely, that the most evil form of government is a tyranny. This, be it noted, is by no means self-evident, and the only authority upon which it is based is the fact that among the classical forms of government a tyranny is the only one that, on principle, was held to be irreconcilable with the concept of freedom.

Our most recent experiences of totalitarian dictatorship seem to me to confirm the classi-

cal conception of the nature of politics. For they have shown clearly that even the most unpromising determination to abolish all political freedom will not attain its object simply by suppressing those things that we commonly call political rights, that it will not suffice merely to forbid men to engage actively in politics, to express their political views in public and to form parties or other associations with a view to political action. As far as is possible—and it is possible to a very far-reaching extent—freedom of thought, the desire for freedom, and even the apparently harmless freedom of artistic creation must also all be destroyed at the same time. In other words—all those spheres that we are wont to regard as being outside the scope of political jurisdiction must also be brought under subjection, for they, too, have a certain element of political content. Or, to put it another way: if men are to be prevented from acting freely as they see fit, they must be prevented from thinking, from having any aspirations, any creative impulses, for all these activities imply action and, therefore, freedom in every sense, including the political. For this reason I myself believe that we completely misinterpret the phenomenon of totalitarian dictatorship if we believe that under it the whole of life will be governed by political decree, and that freedom will thus be completely destroyed. The exact opposite is the case; in dictatorship and despotism we are confronted with phenomena of “depoliticalization,” carried to such a length that it is not content merely to paralyze all action, the outlet par excellence for political activities, but also destroys the element of freedom in every type of activity, including the political.

**Hannah Arendt**, from “Freedom and Politics.” Arendt arrived in New York City in 1941 after fleeing the Gestapo and took a job as a housekeeper while learning English; within five years she had begun writing *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and lecturing at Brooklyn College. In 1961 *The New Yorker* sent her to Israel to cover the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and her report on the “banality of evil” so angered Gershom Scholem that he accused her of having no trace of “ahavat Israel, or love for the Jewish people.” “How right you are,” she wrote back. “I have never in my life ‘loved’ a nation or a collective.”





*Soldier Scene (detail), by Carel de Moor, c. 1700.*

## C. 344 BC: Athens

### BARRICADES AND RAMPARTS

In the first place, Athenians, if anyone views with confidence the present power of Philip and the extent of his dominions, if anyone imagines that all this imports no danger to our city and that you are not the object of his preparations, I must express my astonishment, and beg you all alike to listen to a brief statement of the considerations that have led me to form the opposite conclusion and to regard Philip as our enemy.

All his intrigues are directed against Athens. Observe: He wants to rule, and he has made up his mind that you, Athenians, and you only, are his rivals. He has long injured you—of nothing is he more conscious than of that. It is by holding the cities that are really yours that he retains safe possession of all the rest, and he

feels that if he gave up Amphipolis and Potidaea, his own country would not be safe for him. He knows, then, these two facts—that he is intriguing against you and that you are aware of it. Assuming that you are intelligent, he thinks you are bound to hate him, and he is on the alert, expecting some blow to fall if you can seize an opportunity and if he cannot get in his blow first. That is why he is wide awake and ready to strike, and why he is courting certain people to the detriment of our city—Thebans, I mean, and those Peloponnesians who share their views. He imagines that their cupidity will lead them to accept the present situation, while their natural dullness will prevent them from foreseeing anything that may follow. Yet men of even moderate intelligence might perceive some clear indications, which I had occasion to point out to the Messenians and the Argives, and which may perhaps with advantage be repeated to you.

"Can you not imagine," I said, addressing the Messenians, "how annoyed the Olynthians would have been to hear a word said against Philip in the days when he was handing over to them Anthemus, to which all the former kings of Macedonia laid claim, when he was making them a present of Potidaea, expelling the Athenian settlers, and when he had taken upon himself the responsibility of a quarrel with us and had given them the territory of Potidaea for their own use? Do you imagine they expected to be treated as they have been, or would have believed anyone who suggested it? Nevertheless," I said, "after a brief enjoyment of other men's territory, they have long been robbed by Philip of their own, expelled with contumely, not merely vanquished but betrayed, bought and sold by their own countrymen. For truly such close communications with tyranny corrupt good constitutions. And what of the Thessalians? Do you imagine," I said, "that when he was expelling their despots, or again when he was presenting them with Nicaea and Magnesia, they ever dreamed that a Council of Ten would be established among them, as it is today, or that the same man who restored to them the amphictyonic meeting at Thermopylae would also appropriate their own peculiar revenues? Impossible! But so it came to pass, as all men may know. You," I said, "gaze with won-

der at Philip as he gives away this and promises that, but if you are truly wise, pray that you may never find that he has deceived and cheated you. Truly," I said, "there are manifold means devised by states for protection and safety—stockades, ramparts, fosses, and the like. And all these are wrought by hand and entail expense. But there is one common bulwark that the instinct of sensible men possesses within itself, a good and safe one for all, but invaluable for democracies against tyrants. And what is that bulwark? It is mistrust. Guard that; hold fast to that. If you preserve it, no harm can touch you. What is your object?" I said. "Freedom. Do you not, then, see that Philip's very titles are utterly irreconcilable with that? For every king, every despot is the sworn foe of freedom and of law. Beware," I said, "lest, seeking to be rid of war, you find a master."

**Demosthenes**, from the *Second Philippic*. Demosthenes' career as an orator began soon after he came of age, when he is believed to have sued his guardians for misappropriating the estate left to him after the early death of his parents. After winning his case in court, he worked as a speechwriter and later as a prosecutor's assistant. Around 350 BC he began addressing the assembly at Athens about the Macedonian king Philip II's plan to conquer Greece, proposing that Athens strengthen its armies. His advice went unheeded, and Athens fell to Philip II in 338 BC at the Battle of Chaeronea.

Horse Racing at Kamo Shrine (detail), Japan, late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.





# 1874: Washington, DC

## PAYMENT DUE

Sir, social equality is a right which every man, every woman, and every class of persons have within their own control. They have a right to form their own acquaintances, to establish their own social relationships. Now, what is it we desire? What we desire is this: inasmuch as we have been raised to the dignity, to the honor, to the position of our manhood, we ask that the laws of this country should guarantee all the rights and immunities belonging to that proud position, to be enforced all over this broad land.

The gentleman has told us that if we pass this civil rights bill we will thereby rob the colored men of the South of the friendship of the whites. Now, I am at a loss to see how the friendship of our white friends can be lost to us by simply saying we should be permitted to enjoy the rights enjoyed by other citizens.

I think that there will be no difficulty. But I do think this—that there will be more trouble if we do not have those rights. I regard it important, therefore, that we should make the law so strong that no man can infringe those rights.

I propose to state just this: that we have been identified with the interests of this country from its very foundation. The cotton crop of this country has been raised and its rice fields have been tilled by the hands of our race. All along as the march of progress, as the march of commerce, as the development of your resources has been widening and expanding and spreading, as your vessels have gone on every sea, with the Stars and Stripes waving over them, and carried your commerce everywhere—there the black man's labor has gone to enrich your country and to augment the grandeur of your nationality. This was done in the time of slavery. And, if for the space of time I have noted, we have been hewers of wood and drawers of water; if we have made your cotton fields blossom as the rose; if we have made your rice fields wave with luxuriant harvests; if we have made your corn-fields rejoice; if we have sweated and toiled to

build up the prosperity of the whole country by the productions of our labor, I submit, now that the war has made a change, now that we are free—I submit to the nation whether it is not fair and right that we should come in and enjoy to the fullest extent our freedom and liberty.

A word now as to the question of education. Sir, I know that, indeed, some of our Republican friends are even a little weak on the school clause of this bill; but, sir, the education of the race, the education of the nation, is paramount to all other considerations. I regard it important, therefore, that the colored people should take place in the educational march in this nation, and I would suggest that there should be no discrimination. It is against discrimination in this particular that we complain.

*Freedom is the oxygen  
Of the studio and gallery.*

—Melvin B. Tolson, 1965

Sir, if you look over the reports of superintendents of schools in the several states, you will find, I think, evidences sufficient to warrant Congress in passing the civil rights bill as it now stands. The report of the commissioner of education of California shows that under the operation of law and of prejudice, the colored children of that state are practically excluded from schooling. Here is a case where a large class of children are growing up in our midst in a state of ignorance and semibarbarism. Take the report of the superintendent of education of Indiana, and you will find that while efforts have been made in some places to educate the colored children, yet the prejudice is so great that it debars the colored children from enjoying all the rights which they ought to enjoy under the law. In Illinois, too, the superintendent of education makes this statement: that while the law guarantees education to every child, yet such are the operations among the school trustees that they almost ignore, in some places, the education of colored children.

All we ask is that you, the legislators of the nation, shall pass a law so strong and so powerful



*Penn's Treaty with the Indians (detail), by Edward Hicks, c. 1840.*

that no one shall be able to elude it and destroy our rights under the Constitution and laws of our country. That is all we ask.

But, Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from North Carolina asks that the colored man shall place himself in an attitude to receive his rights. I ask, what attitude can we assume? We have tilled your soil, and during the rude shock of the war, until our hour came, we were docile during that long, dark night, waiting patiently for the coming day.

And for what, Mr. Speaker and gentleman, was the great war made? The gentleman from North Carolina announced before he sat down, in answer to an interrogatory by a gentleman on this side of the House, that they went into the war conscientiously before God. So be it. Then we simply come and plead conscientiously before God that these are our rights, and we want them. We plead conscientiously before God, believing that these are our rights by inheritance, and by the inexorable decree of Almighty God.

We believe in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are born free and equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And we further believe that to secure those rights governments are instituted. And we further believe that when governments cease to subserve those ends the people should change them.

I have been astonished at the course which gentlemen on the other side have

taken in discussing this bill. They plant themselves right behind the Constitution and declare that the rights of the state ought not to be invaded.

I think it is proper and just that the civil rights bill should be passed. Some think it would be better to modify it, to strike out the school clause, or to so modify it that some of the state constitutions should not be infringed. I regard it essential to us and the people of this country that we should be secured in this if in nothing else. I cannot regard that our rights will be secured until the jury-box and the schoolroom, those great palladia of our liberty, shall have been opened to us.

Inasmuch as we have toiled with you in building up this nation; inasmuch as we have suffered side by side with you in the war; inasmuch as we have together passed through affliction and pestilence, let there be now a fulfillment of the sublime thought of our father—let all men enjoy equal liberty and equal rights.

**Richard Harvey Cain**, from a speech delivered in Congress. Cain went to college in Ohio, to which his parents had moved from Virginia in search of better opportunities for free African Americans. Cain became a pastor in Charleston after the Civil War and was elected to South Carolina's state senate in 1868. The following year he introduced a resolution to ask Congress to purchase land to be sold or redistributed to landless citizens. Congress refused, and two years later Cain carried out the project himself on a two-thousand-acre plot he purchased near Charleston. He later served two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives.



## 1913: Hartford, CT

### VOTES FOR WOMEN

We were determined to press this question of the enfranchisement of women to the point where we were no longer to be ignored by the politicians, as had been the case for about fifty years, during which time women had patiently used every means open to them.

We found that all the fine phrases about freedom and liberty were entirely for male consumption, and that they did not in any way apply to women. When it was said that taxation without representation is tyranny—when it was “taxation of men without representation is tyranny”—everybody quite calmly accepted the fact that women had to pay taxes and even were sent to prison if they failed to pay them—quite right.

We found that “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” which is also a time-honored Liberal principle, was again only for male consumption. Half the people were entirely ignored; it was the duty of women to pay their taxes and obey the laws and look as pleasant as they could under the circumstances.

In fact, every principle of liberty enunciated in any civilized country on earth, with very few exceptions, was intended entirely for men, and when women tried to force the putting into practice of these principles for women, they discovered they had come into a very, very unpleasant situation indeed.

Now, I want to say to you who think women cannot succeed: We have brought the government of England to this position. It has to face this alternative: either women are to be killed or women are to have the vote. I ask American men in this meeting, What would you say if in your state you were faced with that alternative—that you must either kill them or give them their citizenship—women, many of whom you respect, women whom you know have lived useful lives, women whom you know, even if you do not know them per-

sonally, are animated with the highest motives, women who are in pursuit of liberty and the power to do useful public service?

Well, there is only one answer to that alternative. There is only one way out of it, unless you are prepared to put back civilization two or three generations: you must give those women the vote. Now that is the outcome of our civil war.

*There's one thing about freedom. Each generation of people begins by thinking they've got it for the first time in history, and ends by being sure the generation younger than themselves have too much of it. It can't really always have been increasing at the rate people suppose, or there would be more of it by now.*

—Rose Macaulay, 1923

You won your freedom in America when you had the revolution, by bloodshed, by sacrificing human life. You won the Civil War by the sacrifice of human life when you decided to emancipate the Negro. You have left it to women in your land—the men of all civilized countries have left it to women—to work out their own salvation.

That is the way in which we women of England are doing. Human life for us is sacred, but we say that if any life is to be sacrificed it shall be ours; we won't do it ourselves, but we will put the enemy in the position where they will have to choose between giving us freedom or giving us death.

**Emmeline Pankhurst**, from “Freedom or Death,” a speech delivered at the invitation of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association. At the age of five, Pankhurst attended a fundraiser for newly emancipated American slaves. “Young as I was,” she later recalled, “I knew perfectly well the meaning of the words slavery and emancipation,” noting that the experience taught her about “that spirit of fighting and heroic sacrifice by which alone the soul of civilization is saved.” In 1889 she founded the Women's Franchise League, which in 1894 secured married women's right to vote in local elections; in 1903 she founded the militant Women's Social and Political Union in Manchester.

## C. 1975: Saigon

### IN SEARCH OF A REVOLUTION

Over the next two months, as we waited for our departure, we continued working on our manuscript. Despite the chronic shortages of almost every good commodity, there was no shortage of paper, since everyone in the neighborhood was required to write confessions on a periodic basis. Even we, who had confessed so extensively, had to write these and submit them to the local cadres. They were exercises in fiction, for we had to find things to confess even though we had not done anything. Small things, like failing to display sufficient enthusiasm at a self-criticism session, were acceptable. But certainly nothing big, and we never failed to end a confession without writing that nothing was more precious than independence and freedom.

*Total freedom is never what one imagines and, in fact, hardly exists. It comes as a shock in life to learn that we usually only exchange one set of restrictions for another. The second set, however, is self-chosen, and therefore easier to accept.*

—Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1973

Now it is the evening before our departure. We have paid for Bon's fare and our own with the commissar's gold, hidden in my rucksack's false bottom. The cipher that we share with the commissar has taken the gold's place, the heaviest thing we will carry after this manuscript, our testament if not our will. We have nothing to leave to anyone except these words, our best attempt to represent ourselves against all those who sought to represent us. Tomorrow we will join those tens of thousands who have taken to the sea, refugees from a revolution. According to the navigator's plan, on the afternoon of our departure tomorrow, from houses all over Saigon, families will leave as if on a short trip lasting less than a day. We will travel by bus to a village three hours south, where a ferryman

waits by a riverbank, a conical hat shading his features. Can you take us to our uncle's funeral? To this coded question, the coded answer: Your uncle was a great man. We, along with the navigator, his wife, and Bon, clamber aboard the skiff, we carrying in our rucksack our rubber-bound cipher and this unbound manuscript, wrapped in watertight plastic. We glide across the river to a hamlet where the rest of the navigator's clan will join us. The mother ship awaits farther down the river, a fishing trawler for 150, almost all of whom will hide in the hold. It will be hot, warned the navigator. It reeks. Once the crew battens down the hatches of the hold, we will struggle to breathe, no vents to alleviate the pressure from 150 bodies locked in a space for a third that number. Heavier than depleted air, however, is the knowledge that even astronauts have a better chance of survival than we do.

Around our shoulders and chest we will strap the rucksack, cipher, and manuscript inside. Whether we live or die, the weight of those words will hang on us. Only a few more need to be written by the light of this oil lamp. Having answered the commissar's question, we find ourselves facing more questions, universal and timeless ones that never get tired. What do those who struggle against power do when they seize power? What does the revolutionary do when the revolution triumphs? Why do those who call for independence and freedom take away the independence and freedom of others? And is it sane or insane to believe, as so many around us apparently do, in nothing? We can answer these questions only for ourselves.

Tomorrow we will find ourselves among strangers, reluctant mariners of whom a tentative manifest can be written. Among us will be infants and children, as well as adults and parents, but no elderly, for none dare the voyage. Among us will be men and women, as well as the thin and lean, but not one among us will be fat, the entire nation having undergone a forced diet. Among us will be the light-skinned, dark-skinned, and every shade in between, some speaking in refined



accents and some in rough ones. Many will be Chinese, persecuted for being Chinese, with many others the recipients of degrees in reeducation. Collectively we will be called the boat people, a name we heard once more earlier this night, when we surreptitiously listened to the Voice of America on the navigator's radio. Now that we are to be counted among these boat people, their name disturbs

us. It smacks of anthropological condescension, evoking some forgotten branch of the human family, some lost tribe of amphibians emerging from ocean mist, crowned with seaweed. But we are not primitives, and we are not to be pitied. If and when we reach safe harbor, it will hardly be a surprise if we, in turn, turn our backs on the unwanted, human nature being what we know of it. Yet we are not cynical.

## 1888: Sils Maria

### HERD-ANIMALIZATION

My conception of freedom:

The value of a thing sometimes does not lie in that which one attains by it, but in what one pays for it—what it costs us. I shall give an example. Liberal institutions cease to be liberal as soon as they are attained: later on, there are no worse and no more thorough injurers of freedom than liberal institutions. Their effects are known well enough: they undermine the will to power; they level mountain and valley, and call that morality; they make men small, cowardly, and hedonistic—every time it is the herd animal that triumphs with them. Liberalism: in other words, herd-animalization.

These same institutions produce quite different effects while they are still being fought for; then they really promote freedom in a powerful way. On closer inspection, it is war that produces these effects, the war *for* liberal institutions, which, as a war, permits illiberal instincts to continue. And war educates for freedom. For what is freedom? That one has the will to assume responsibility for oneself. That one maintains the distance which separates us. That one becomes more indifferent to difficulties, hardships, privation, even to life itself. That one is prepared to sacrifice human beings for one's cause, not excluding oneself. Freedom means that the manly instincts which delight in war and victory dominate over other instincts—for example, over those of “pleasure.” The human being who has become free—and how much more the *spirit* who has become free—spits on the contemptible type of well-being dreamed of by shopkeepers, Christians, cows, females, Englishmen, and other democrats. The free man is a warrior.

How is freedom measured in individuals and peoples? According to the resistance that must be overcome, according to the exertion required, to remain on top. The highest type of free men should be sought where the highest resistance is constantly overcome: five steps from tyranny, close to the threshold of the danger of servitude. This is true psychologically if by “tyrants” are meant inexorable and fearful instincts that provoke the maximum of authority and discipline against themselves—most beautiful type: Julius Caesar. This is true politically, too; one need only go through history. The peoples who had some value, *attained* some value, never attained it under liberal institutions: it was great danger that made something of them that merits respect. Danger alone acquaints us with our own resources, our virtues, our armor and weapons, our *spirit*, and *forces* us to be strong. First principle: one must need to be strong—otherwise one will never become strong.

Those large hothouses for the strong—for the strongest kind of human being that has so far been known, the aristocratic commonwealths of the type of Rome or Venice—understood freedom exactly in the sense in which I understand it: as something one has or does *not* have, something one *wants*, something one *conquers*.

**Friedrich Nietzsche**, from *Twilight of the Idols*. Nietzsche wrote this book over the course of twenty days in 1888. He originally intended to call it *Idleness of a Psychologist*, but a friend—the composer Heinrich Köselitz, whom Nietzsche called “Peter Gast” in his letters—persuaded him to use this title, a play on Richard Wagner’s 1876 opera *Twilight of the Gods*. Four months after Nietzsche finished writing the book, he collapsed on a street in Turin and spent most of the rest of his life institutionalized.



*The Chariot of Apollo*, by Odilon Redon, c. 1910.

Despite it all—yes, despite everything, in the face of nothing—we still consider ourselves revolutionary. We remain that most hopeful of creatures, a revolutionary in search of a revolution, although we will not dispute being called a dreamer doped by an illusion. Soon enough we will see the scarlet sunrise on that horizon where the east is always red, but for now our view through the window is a dark alley, the pavement barren, the curtains closed. Surely we cannot be the only ones awake, even if we are the only ones with a single lamp lit. No, we cannot be alone. Thousands more must be staring into darkness like us, gripped by scandalous thoughts, extravagant hopes, and forbidden plots. We lie in wait for the right moment and the just cause, which, at this mo-

ment, is simply wanting to live, and even as we write this final sentence, the sentence that will not be revised, we confess to being certain of one and only one thing—we swear to keep, on penalty of death, this one promise:

We will live!

**Viet Thanh Nguyen**, from *The Sympathizer*. Nguyen's family fled the central Vietnamese highlands for Saigon when North Vietnamese troops invaded but left when the city was captured a month later. They arrived in Pennsylvania in 1975 and moved to San Jose, California, three years later. *The Sympathizer* is loosely based on the story of Pham Xuan An, a correspondent for *Time* magazine who was also a spy for the Vietcong. In a 2020 interview Nguyen suggested that writers should "recognize what it feels like not to be at home, because it's that discomfort that helps us to produce something interesting in our writing."



## c. 830: Luoyang

### TOO LATE

Around my garden the little wall is low;  
In the bailiff's lodge the lists are seldom checked.  
I am ashamed to think we were not always kind;  
I regret your labors, which will never be repaid.  
The caged bird owes no allegiance;  
The wind-tossed flower does not cling to the tree.

Where tonight she lies none can give us news;  
Nor any knows, save the bright watching moon.

**Bai Juyi**, "Losing a Slave Girl." Like many poets of the Tang dynasty, Bai had a career in the imperial government, holding archival and administrative positions while composing his verse. "Bai regretted not having written more poems on social issues and not having invested those he wrote with greater conviction," translator Rewi Alley writes of the poet's attempts to draw attention to corruption and injustice, which led to his brief exile in 815. "One suspects, however, that a number of Bai's poems of social criticism were dropped from their collected works by later compilers."

## 1980: California

### MORE SUBTLE THAN SLAVE SHIPS

Dear Lucy,

You ask why I snubbed you at the Women for Elected Officials Ball. I don't blame you for feeling surprised and hurt. After all, we planned the ball together, expecting to raise our usual pisspot full of money for a good cause. Such a fine idea, our ball: Come as the feminist you most admire! But I did not know you most admired Scarlett O'Hara, and so I was, for a moment, taken aback.

I don't know; maybe I should see that picture again. Sometimes when I see movies that hurt me as a child, the pain is minor; I can laugh at the things that made me sad. My trouble with Scarlett was always the forced buffoonery of Prissy, whose strained, slavish voice, as Miz Scarlett pushed her so masterfully up the stairs, I could never get out of my head.

But there is another reason I could not speak to you at the ball that had nothing to do with what is happening just now between us: this heavy bruised silence, this anger and distrust. The day of the ball was my last class day at the university, and it was a very heavy and discouraging day.

Do you remember the things I told you about the class? Its subject was God. That is, the inner spirit, the inner voice; the human compulsion when deeply distressed to seek healing counsel within ourselves, and the capacity within ourselves both to create this counsel and to receive it.

(It had always amused me that the God who spoke to Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth told them exactly what they needed to hear, no less than the God of the Old Testament constantly reassured the ancient Jews.)

Indeed, as I read the narratives of black people who were captured and set to slaving away their lives in America, I saw that this inner

Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, Iraq, 1974. Photograph by Bruno Barbey.





spirit, this inner capacity for self-comforting, this ability to locate God within that they expressed, demonstrated something marvelous about human beings. Nature has created us with the capacity to know God, to experience God, just as it has created us with the capacity to know speech. The experience of God, or in any case the possibility of experiencing God, *is innate!*

I suppose this has all been thought before, but it came to me as a revelation after reading how the fifth or sixth black woman, finding herself captured, enslaved, sexually abused, starved, whipped, the mother of children she could not want, lover of children she could not have, crept into the corners of the fields, among the haystacks and the animals, and found within her own heart the only solace and love she was ever to know.

It was as if these women found a twin self who saved them from their abused consciousness and chronic physical loneliness; and that twin self is in all of us, waiting only to be summoned.

To prepare my class to comprehend God in this way, I requested they read narratives of these captured black women and also write narratives themselves, as if they *were* those women, or women like them.

It was an extraordinary class, Lucy! With women of all colors, all ages, all shapes and sizes, and all conditions. There were lesbians, straights, curved, celibates, prostitutes, mothers, confused, and sundry brilliants of all persuasions! A wonderful class! And almost all of them, though hesitant to admit it at first—who dares talk seriously of “religious” matters these days?—immediately sensed what I meant when I spoke of the inner, companion spirit, of “God.”

Lucy, I wanted to teach my students what it felt like to be captured and enslaved. I wanted them to be unable, when they left my class, to think of enslaved women as exotic, picturesque, removed from themselves, deserving of enslavement. I wanted them to be able to repudiate all the racist stereotypes about black women who were enslaved: that they were content, that they somehow “chose” their servitude, that they did not resist.

## 1913: Cambridge

### ROOM TO THINK

What are the great poetical names of the last hundred years or so? Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Landor, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne—we may stop there. Of these, all but Keats, Browning, Rossetti were university men; and of these three, Keats, who died young, cut off in his prime, was the only one not fairly well-to-do. It may seem a brutal thing to say, and it is a sad thing to say, but as a matter of hard fact, the theory that poetical genius bloweth where it listeth, and equally in poor and rich, holds little truth. As a matter of hard fact, nine out of those twelve were university men; which means that somehow or other they procured the means to get the best education England can give. As a matter of hard fact, of the remaining three you know that Browning was well-to-do, and I challenge you that if he had not been well-to-do, he would no more have attained to writing “Saul” or *The Ring and the Book* than Ruskin would have attained to writing *Modern Painters* if his father had not dealt prosperously in business. Rossetti had a small private income and, moreover, he painted. There remains but Keats, whom Atropos slew young, as she slew John Clare in a madhouse and James Thomson by the laudanum he took to drug disappointment. These are dreadful facts, but let us face them. It is—however dishonoring to us as a nation—certain that by some fault in our commonwealth, the poor poet has not in these days, nor has had for two hundred years, a dog’s chance. Believe me—and I have spent a great part of the past ten years in watching some 320 elementary schools—we may prate of democracy, but actually a poor child in England has little more hope than had the son of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born.

**Arthur Quiller-Couch**, from *On the Art of Writing. Following the Balfour Act of 1902, Quiller-Couch joined the Cornwall Education Committee and helped expand secondary education in the region. This text originated as a lecture series he delivered at Cambridge in 1913 and 1914. Virginia Woolf quoted Quiller-Couch extensively in A Room of One’s Own, and in 1927 Hogarth Press, the publishing house she ran with her husband, Leonard, published Quiller-Couch’s A Lecture on Lectures, a critique of popular methods of rote learning.*

## Home Free

*The emancipatory potential of domestic work*



In her 2011 book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, **Marie Kondo**

wrote of a client who shipped her keepsakes—“a diary, photographs of old boyfriends, a mountain of letters and New Year’s cards”—to her mother’s house in order to declutter her own. Realizing that she still felt burdened by the possessions, the client later visited her mother and threw the keepsakes away, declaring, “Now I can enjoy the rest of my life free from care!”



In Mary Gaitskill’s novel *Veronica*, the model turned housekeeper **Alison** scrubs her friends’ offices and homes despite searing shoulder pain and an opiate dependence. As she works, she imagines watching a “tiny piece of movie” about a killer in an amusement park “on my eyeball.” As she heaves buckets of water and scrubs toilets, “the roller coaster roars and everybody screams” and a car “flies off into the sky and smashes on the ground.”

In Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*, the enslaved teenage protagonist, **Sethe**, uses pilfered pillowcases and mosquito netting to patch together “the worst-looking gown you ever saw” for her imminent wedding. Later, after she escapes her abusive new master and delivers a baby, Sethe is cared for by her mother-in-law, who sits by her side “tearing sheets, stitching the gray cotton” to prepare a new dress for Sethe to wear as a free woman.



Some black women found it extremely difficult to write as captured and enslaved women. (I do not use the word *slaves* casually, because I see enslavement from the enslaved’s point of view: there is a world of difference between being a slave and being enslaved.) They chose to write as mistress or master. Some white women found it nearly impossible to write as mistress or master, and presumptuous to write as enslaved. Still, there were many fine papers written, Lucy, though there was also much hair tugging and gnashing of teeth.

“The ladies and men of Bloomsbury, who never lived a day without others arranging those little but crucial things of their lives, missed something, perhaps the very thing they sought—something of life, something of freedom,” the philosopher **Mary Townsend** wrote in 2016.

“To leave the ordering of our house to others, I think, is not merely to leave behind an interesting opportunity for reflection, but to abdicate the very ground of thought.”



In poet **Eavan Boland**’s ode to the “neither-here-nor-there hour” of twilight, she contemplates “women of work, of leisure, of the night/in stove-colored silks, in lace, in nothing/with crewel needles, with books, with wide-open legs,” all of whom flee “into a landscape without emphasis...a hemisphere of tiered, aired cotton/a hot terrain of linen.”

Writer Wendell Berry admired **Nate Shaw**, an Alabama sharecropper and labor activist, because “his ideal was independence.”



Shaw “raised a garden, kept a milk cow or two, fed his own meat hogs and thus reduced his family’s dependence...He had a fierce loyalty to his own country and to the investment of his own labor in it.”

Does anyone want to be a slave? we pondered.

As a class, we thought not.

Imagine our surprise, therefore, when many of us watched a television special on sadomasochism that aired the night before our class ended, and the only interracial couple in it, lesbians, presented themselves as mistress and slave. The white woman, who did all the talking, was mistress (wearing a ring in the shape of a key that she said fit the lock on the chain around the black woman’s neck), and the black woman,



who stood smiling and silent, was—the white woman said—her slave.

And this is why, though we have been friends for over a decade, Lucy, I snubbed you at the ball.

All I had been teaching was subverted by that one image, and I was incensed to think of the hard struggle of my students to rid themselves of stereotype, to combat prejudice, to put themselves into enslaved women's skins, and then to see their struggle mocked, and the actual enslaved *condition* of literally millions of our mothers trivialized—because two ignorant women insisted on their right to act out publicly a “fantasy” that still strikes terror in black women's hearts. And embarrassment and disgust, at least in the hearts of most of the white women in my class.

One white woman student, apparently with close ties to our local lesbian S&M group, said she could see nothing wrong with what we'd seen on TV. (Incidentally, there were several white men on this program who owned white women as “slaves,” and even claimed to hold legal documents to this effect. Indeed, one man paraded his slave around town with a horse's bit between her teeth, and “lent” her out to other sadomasochists to be whipped.) It is all fantasy, she said. No harm done. Slavery, real slavery, is over, after all.

But it isn't over, Lucy, and Kathleen Barry's book on female sexual slavery and Linda Lovelace's book on being such a slave are not the only recent indications that this is true. There are places in the world, Lucy, where human beings are still being bought and sold! And so, for that reason, when I saw you at the ball, all I could think was that you were insultingly dressed. No, that is not all I thought: once seeing you dressed as Scarlett, I could not see you. I did not *dare* see you. When you accuse me of looking through you, you are correct. For if I had seen you, Lucy, I'm sure I would have struck you, and with your love of fighting this would surely have meant the end of our ball. And so it was better *not* to see you, to look instead at the woman next to you who had kinked her hair to look like Colette.

So, Lucy, you and I will be friends again because I will talk you out of caring about heroines whose real source of power, as well as the literal shape and condition of their bodies, comes from the people they oppress. But what of the future? What of the women who will never come together because of what they saw in the relationship between “mistress” and “slave” on TV? Many black women fear it is as slaves white women want them; no doubt many white women think some amount of servitude from black women is their due.

*Give us this day our television, and an automobile, but deliver us from freedom.*

—Jean-Luc Godard, 1966

But, Lucy, regardless of the “slave” on television, black women do not want to be slaves. They never wanted to be slaves. We will be ourselves and free, or die in the attempt. Harriet Tubman was not our great-grandmother for nothing, which I would advise all black and white women aggressing against us as “mistress” and “slave” to remember. We understand when an attempt is being made to lead us into captivity, though television is a lot more subtle than slave ships. We will simply resist, as we have always done, with ever more accurate weapons of defense. As a matter of fact, Lucy, it occurs to me that we might plan another ball in the spring as a benefit for this new resistance. What do you think? Do let us get together to discuss it, during the week.

Your friend,  
Susan Marie

**Alice Walker**, from *“A Letter of the Times, or Should This Sadomasochism Be Saved?”*, a short story. The daughter of sharecroppers, Walker enrolled in Spelman College in 1961 on a scholarship and later transferred to Sarah Lawrence. After graduating she became active in the civil rights movement and registered Black voters in Liberty County, Georgia. Her third novel, *The Color Purple*, made her the first Black woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction; one review called the novel “that rare sort of book which (in Norman Mailer's felicitous phrase) amounts to ‘a diversion in the fields of dread.’”

## 1651: Paris

### POWER TO MOVE

*Liberty*, or *freedom*, signifies properly the absence of opposition—by opposition I mean external impediments of motion—and may be applied no less to irrational and inanimate creatures than to rational. For whatsoever is so tied or environed as it cannot move but within a certain space, which space is determined by the opposition of some external body, we say it has not liberty to go farther. And so of all living creatures while they are imprisoned or restrained with walls or chains, and of the water while it is kept in by banks or vessels that otherwise would spread itself into a larger space, we say they are not at liberty to move in such manner as without those external impediments they would. But when the impediment of motion is in the constitution of the thing itself, we do not to say it wants the liberty but the power to move—as when a stone lies still or a man is fastened to his bed by sickness.

And according to this proper and generally received meaning of the word, a *freeman* is he that in those things which by his strength and wit he is able to do is not hindered to do what he has a will to. But when the words *free* and *liberty* are applied to anything but bodies, they are abused, for that which is not subject to motion is not subject to impediment; therefore, when it is said, for example, the way is free, no liberty of the way is signified but of those that walk in it without stop. And when we say a gift is free, there is not meant any liberty of the gift but of the giver, that was not bound by any law or covenant to give it. So when we speak freely, it is not the liberty of voice or pronunciation but of the man, whom no law has obliged to speak otherwise than he did. Lastly, from the use of the word *free will*, no liberty can be inferred of the will, desire, or inclination but the liberty of the man, which consists in this: that he finds no stop in doing what he has the will, desire, or inclination to do.

Fear and liberty are consistent, as when a man throws his goods into the sea for fear the ship should sink—he does it nevertheless very

willingly, and may refuse to do it if he will. It is therefore the action of one that was free; so a man sometimes pays his debt only for *fear* of imprisonment, which, because nobody hindered him from detaining, was the action of a man at liberty. And generally all actions which men do in commonwealths for fear of the law are actions which the doers had liberty to omit.

Liberty and necessity are consistent, as in the water that has not only liberty but a necessity of descending by the channel; so likewise in the actions which men voluntarily do, which, because they proceed from their will, proceed from liberty, and yet—because every act of man's will and every desire and inclination proceeds from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continual chain whose first link is in the hand of God, the first of all causes—proceed from necessity. So that to him that could see the connection of those causes the necessity of all men's voluntary actions would appear manifest. And therefore God, who sees and disposes all things, sees also that the liberty of man in doing what he will is accompanied with the necessity of doing that which God wills, and no more nor less. For though men may do many things which God does not command, nor is therefore author of them, yet they can have no passion nor appetite to anything of which appetite God's will is not the cause. And did not his will assure the necessity of man's will, and consequently of all that on man's will depends, the liberty of men would be a contradiction and impediment to the omnipotence and liberty of God. And this shall suffice as to the matter in hand, of that natural liberty which only is properly called liberty.

**Thomas Hobbes**, from *Leviathan*. The son of a clergyman in Wiltshire, Hobbes studied at the University of Oxford before becoming a tutor to William Cavendish, a future earl of Devonshire. Hobbes fled England in 1640, fearing persecution for his royalist sympathies, and lived in Paris for eleven years. *Leviathan* has been read as an endorsement of Charles I's decision to reign for eleven years without ever convening Parliament. The book was later investigated by a House of Commons committee, after which Hobbes burned many of his papers.





*Garden Party*, by David Vinckboons, c. 1610.

## 1907: Switzerland

### EXCEPTIONAL NOBILITY

Simon was filled with thoughts, with beautiful thoughts. Whenever he was thinking, beautiful thoughts flooded his mind quite involuntarily. The next morning—the sun was blindingly bright—he reported to the Employment Referral Office. The man who sat there writing got to his feet. This man knew Simon quite well and was in the habit of addressing him with a sort of mocking agreeable familiarity. “Ah, Mr. Simon! Back again? What brings you to us today?”

“I’m looking for a job.”

“You’ve certainly stopped by here often enough while seeking employment, a person might be tempted to think you uncannily swift when it comes to job-seeking.” The man laughed, but his laugh was gentle; he was incapable of harsh laughter. “What was your last place of employment, if I’m allowed to ask?”

Simon replied: “I was a nurse. I proved to be in possession of all those qualities needed for tending the infirm. Why does your jaw drop at my admission? Is it so terribly strange for a man my age to try out various professions and

attempt to make himself useful to all different sorts of people? I find this quite a nice trait in myself, for it requires a certain courage. My dignity is in no way injured—on the contrary, I pride myself on being able to solve all manner of life problems without trembling in the face of difficulties that might scare most people off. I am useful, and this certainty is enough to satisfy my pride. I wish to be of service.”

“And so why did you not continue in the nursing profession?” the man asked.

“I don’t have time to stick to a single profession,” Simon replied, “and it would never occur to me to repose, as many do, upon one type of profession as if it were a mattress with springs. No, I wouldn’t succeed at that even if I lived to be a thousand. I’d rather go and join the army.”

“Be careful that’s not what happens.”

“There are other escape routes as well. The army remark is just a casual expression I’ve gotten in the habit of using to conclude my speeches. There are so many ways out for a young man like myself. In the summertime, I can go find a farmer and work in the fields to help bring in the harvest on time. He’ll welcome me and be grateful for my strength. He’ll feed me and feed me well, they really cook out in the country, and when I

## 1774: Boston

### DELIVERANCE

Reverend and Honored Sir,

I have this day received your obliging, kind epistle, and am greatly satisfied with your reasons respecting the Negroes, and think highly reasonable what you offer in vindication of their natural rights. Those that invade them cannot be insensible that the divine light is chasing away the thick darkness which broods over the land of Africa, and the chaos which has reigned so long is converting into beautiful order and reveals more and more clearly the glorious dispensation of civil and religious liberty, which are so inseparably united that there is little or no enjoyment of one without the other. Otherwise, perhaps, the Israelites had been less solicitous for their freedom from Egyptian slavery. I do not say they would have been contented without it, by no means, for in every human breast God has implanted a principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of oppression, and pants for deliverance; and by the leave of our modern Egyptians I will assert that the same principle lives in us. God grants deliverance in his own way and time, and gets him honor upon all those whose avarice impels them to countenance and help forward the calamities of their fellow creatures. This I desire not for their hurt, but to convince them of the strange absurdity of their conduct whose words and actions are so diametrically opposite. How well the cry for liberty and the reverse disposition for the exercise of oppressive power over others agree—I humbly think it does not require the penetration of a philosopher to determine.

*Phillis Wheatley, from a letter to Reverend Samson Occum. Wheatley was captured in Gambia by slave traders in 1761 and sold to a family in Boston; she was named after the ship on which she arrived. She began writing poetry around the age of fourteen. In 1773 the Wheatley family took her to London, where she published her first book. Wheatley was emancipated shortly thereafter. During the American Revolution she sent her antislavery poems to George Washington, who responded that he thought her “elegant lines” to be “striking proof of your poetical talents.”*

leave him again, he'll press a few banknotes into my hand, and his young daughter, a fresh-faced lovely girl, will smile at me in parting in such a way that she will occupy my thoughts for a long time as I continue on my road. What harm is

there in being on the road, even if it's raining or snowing, as long you have healthy limbs and remain free from cares? You, squeezed into your corner there, cannot even imagine how glorious it is to ramble down country roads. If they're dusty, then dusty is just how they are, no need to trouble your head about it. Afterward you find yourself a cozy cool spot at the edge of the forest and as you lie there your eyes enjoy the most splendid view, and your senses repose in the most natural way, and your thoughts wander as taste and pleasure fancy. You'll no doubt counter that another person can do just the same thing—you yourself, for example, when you're on vacation. But vacations, what are they? The thought of them makes me laugh. I wish to have nothing to do with vacations. One might even say I hate them. Whatever you do, just don't set me up with a position involving vacations. This wouldn't appeal to me at all—in fact I think I'd die if I were given vacations. As far as I'm concerned I wish to do battle with life, fighting until I keel over: I wish to taste neither freedom nor comfort, I hate freedom if it's hurled at my feet the way you throw a dog a bone. That's vacation for you. If you happen to think you see standing before you a man with a hankering for a vacation, you are very much mistaken, but I have every reason to suspect this is just what you think of me, alas.”

“Here's a temporary post at a lawyer's office that needs filling for approximately one month. Would that suit you?”

“Most certainly, sir.”

With this, Simon landed in the lawyer's office. He earned a pretty penny there and was perfectly content. Never had the world appeared lovelier to him than during this lawyer episode. He made some pleasant acquaintances, spent the day writing in an easy, effortless manner, checked over calculations, took dictation—at which he was particularly skillful—and to his own surprise behaved in such a charming way that his superior took a lively interest in him; he drank his daily cup of tea in the afternoon, and while he was writing, daydreamed out the breezy bright window. Daydreaming without neglecting his duties—he was supremely skilled at this.



"I am earning so much money," he thought to himself, "that I could have a young woman." The moon often shone in the window as he worked, and this enchanted him.

In conversation with his little lady friend Rosa, Simon expressed himself in the following manner: "My lawyer has a long red nose and is a tyrant, but I get along with him quite well. I take his grumpy dictatorial nature as humorous and am myself surprised at how well I submit to all his commandments, many of which are unfair. I love it when things get a bit caustic, that suits me well, launching me to certain warm heights and whetting my appetite for work. He has a beautiful slender wife whom I should like to paint if I were a painter. She has, take my word for it, wonderful large eyes and splendid arms. Often she busies herself with something or other in the office; how she must look down on me, poor devil of a copy clerk. When I look upon such women I tremble and yet I'm happy. Are you laughing? Unfortunately I am accustomed to show myself before you without inhibitions, and I can only hope this pleases you."

Indeed Rosa did love it when people were open with her. She was a peculiar girl. Her eyes had a marvelous gleam, and her lips were downright lovely.

Simon went on: "When I'm on my way to work at eight in the morning, I feel so beauti-

fully connected to all the others who must also report to work at eight. What a great barracks modern life is! And yet how beautiful and contemplative all this uniformity. Constantly you long for something that might be approaching, something you ought to encounter. You're so utterly bereft of possessions, so very much the poor devil, and you find yourself utterly at sea amid all this erudite, orderly precision. I ascend the four flights of stairs, go in, say 'Good morning,' and begin my work. Good God, how little is being asked of me, how little knowledge they expect. How little those around me seem to suspect I might be capable of quite different things. But this charming lack of demandingness on the part of my employers suits me perfectly. I can think while I am working—I have great prospects of becoming a thinker. I often think of you!"

**Robert Walser**, from *The Tanners*. Walser moved to Berlin in 1905, where he wrote thousands of stories and sketches of everyday street life. In an introduction to a collection of his short stories, Susan Sontag writes that Walser's fiction is "charged with compassion: awareness of the creatureliness of life"; Walter Benjamin wrote in 1929 that Walser's characters "display a quite exceptional nobility." After suffering a series of mental breakdowns, Walser spent the last twenty-three years of his life in an asylum, where he died while walking in the snow on Christmas Day in 1956.

John Wilkes, *Esquire* (detail), by William Hogarth, 1763.



## 1970: Somalia

### MATCH, SET, VIEWPOINT

Escape! To get free from all restraints, from being the wife of Giumaleh. To get away from unpleasantries. To break the ropes society had wrapped around her and to be free and be herself. Ebla thought of all this, and much else.

"But why is a woman a woman? To give companionship to man? To beget him children? To do a woman's duty? But that is only in the house. What else?" she asked herself. "Surely a woman is indispensable to a man, but do men realize it? A man needs a woman. A woman needs a man. Not to the same degree? A man needs a woman to cheat, to tell lies to, to sleep with. In

*Question: Who deserves freedom?*

*Answer: I do, of course.*

—Stacia Deutsch, 2016

this way a baby is born, weak and forlorn. He decides to belittle his mother as soon as he is old enough to walk. He slides away, becomes a heavy burden until he is independent, gets his basic education, like talking, walking, eating, under the care of his mother. When a child, he fidgets about like a lid on top of a boiler. He is infuriating at this stage—he should be put in a cage. After a while, he walks, he talks—only his mother's language at first. He smiles at his mother. . . . But Giumaleh is the wrong match," she suddenly told herself. "I definitely can't marry him."

But who or what should she escape from? This was the real question that needed to be answered. Inside her, she knew why she wanted to escape. Actually it was more than a want: it was a desire, a desire stronger than anything, a thing to long for. Her escape meant her freedom. Her escape meant her new life. Her escape meant her parting with the country and its harsh life. Her escape meant the divine emancipation of the body and soul of a human being.

She desired, more than anything, to fly away, like a cock that has unknotted itself from

the string tying its leg to the wall. She wanted to fly away from the dependence on the seasons, the seasons that determine the life or death of the nomads. And she wanted to fly away from the squabbles over water, squabbles caused by the lack of water, which meant that the season was bad. She wanted to go away from the duty of women. Not that she was intending to feel idle and do nothing, nor did she feel irresponsible, but a woman's duty meant loading and unloading camels and donkeys after the destination had been reached, and that life was routine: goats for girls and camels for boys got on her nerves more than she could stand. To her, this allotment of assignments denotes the status of a woman, that she was lower in status than a man and that she was weak. "But it is only because camels are stupid beasts that boys can manage to handle them," she always consoled herself. She loathed this discrimination between the sexes: the idea that boys lift up the prestige of the family and keep the family's name alive. Even a moron-male cost twice as much as two women in terms of blood compensation. As many as twenty or thirty camels are allotted to each son. The women, however, have to wait until their fates give them a new status in life: the status of marriage. A she-camel is given to the son, "tied to his navel," as people say, as soon as he is born. "Maybe God prefers men to women," she told herself.

But Ebla had no answers to the questions of how to escape, where should she escape to, whom should she go to, and when she should escape.

To escape. To be free. To be free. To be free. To escape. These were interrelated.

How to escape? Where to escape to?

**Nuruddin Farah**, from *From a Crooked Rib*. Farah wrote this novel while living in India, where he studied philosophy and literature at the University of the Punjab. He returned to Somalia in 1970 but was forced to leave again in 1974 after President Mohamed Siad Barre began targeting Farah's works for censorship. Three years later the writer was sentenced in absentia to thirty years in prison. In his memoir Joseph Anton, Salman Rushdie wrote that "every book Nuruddin wrote in exile had been set in a naturalistically portrayed Somalia. 'I keep it here,' Nuruddin said, pointing to his heart."





*A Ride for Liberty—the Fugitive Slaves, by Eastman Johnson, c. 1862.*

## 1922: Lisbon

### TEMPLE OF MAMMON

"I had to apply to practical life the fundamental process of anarchist action—combating social fictions without creating a new tyranny and, if possible, creating a foretaste of a future freedom. But how on earth was I to put this into practice?

"I couldn't destroy all social fictions; that could only be carried out by a social revolution. I would have to subjugate them. I would have to overcome them by subjugation, by rendering them powerless."

He suddenly pointed at me with his right index finger. "And that was what I did!" He immediately withdrew the gesture and went on.

"I tried to see what was the first and most important of those social fictions. For that, more than any other, was the one I should try to subjugate, try to render powerless. The most

important, at least in our day and age, is money. How could I subjugate money, or to be more precise, the power and tyranny of money? I could do so by freeing myself from its influence and power, thereby placing myself beyond its influence and rendering it powerless over me. Do you understand? I was the one combating it; if I were to render it powerless over everyone, that would not be subjugating it but destroying it, because that would be putting an end once and for all to the fiction of money. I have already established that a social fiction can be destroyed only by social revolution and dragged along with the other social fictions in the fall of bourgeois society.

"How could I make myself superior to money? The simplest way was to remove myself from its sphere of influence—that is, from civilization—to go into the country and live off roots and drink spring water, to walk around naked and live as the animals live. But this,

apart from the obvious difficulties involved, would not be combating a social fiction; it would not be combating anything, it would be running away. It's true that anyone who avoids joining in a fight also avoids being defeated by it. Morally, though, he is defeated, precisely because he did not fight. There had to be another way, a way that would involve fighting, not fleeing. How could I subjugate money by fighting it? How could I shrug off its influence and tyranny over me without avoiding contact with it? There was only one way forward. I would have to acquire money, I would have to acquire

enough of it not to feel its influence, and the more I acquired, the freer I would be from that influence. When I saw this clearly, with all the force of my anarchist convictions and all the logic of a clear-thinking man, only then did I enter the present phase—the commercial and banking phase—of my anarchism.”

He rested a moment from the increasingly violent enthusiasm with which he expounded his argument. Then, still somewhat heatedly, he went on with his narrative. “Now, do you remember the two logical difficulties that I told you had arisen at the beginning of my career

Perseus releasing Andromeda, fresco from the House of the Dioscuri, Pompeii, c. 70.





as a fully conscious anarchist? And do you remember that, at the time, I told you that I had resolved them artificially—emotionally rather than logically? You saw, quite clearly, that I did not resolve them by logic...”

“Yes, I remember.”

“And do you remember that I told you that, later on, when I found the true way forward for anarchism, that I did then resolve them logically?”

“I do.”

“This is how I resolved them. The difficulties were as follows: it is not natural to work for anything, whatever it is, without receiving a natural—that is, selfish—reward for it; and it is not natural to put all that effort into something without having the reward of knowing that your aim will be achieved. Those were the two difficulties. They were resolved by the anarchist course of action that my reasoning led me to realize was the only true course of action. The result of that course of action was that I would grow rich; there you have the selfish reward. The aim was to achieve freedom; by making myself superior to the power of money—that is, by freeing myself from it—I would achieve freedom. I would achieve freedom only for myself, of course, but as I have already established, freedom for all can only come with the destruction of all social fictions, via a social revolution, and I could not make that social revolution alone. The point is this: I aim for freedom, I achieve freedom; I achieve what freedom I can because, obviously, I can only achieve a freedom that is achievable. And you see, apart from demonstrating that this anarchist course of action is the only true one, the very fact that it automatically resolves all the logical difficulties that might oppose an anarchist course of action is still further proof.

“So that was the course of action I followed. I set to work to subjugate the fiction of money by growing rich. I succeeded. It took some time because it was a great struggle, but I managed it. There’s no need for me to tell you about my commercial and banking life. It might be of interest, especially certain aspects

## c. 1990: Soviet Union

### SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY

We were raised on Lenin, fiery revolutionaries, so fiery we didn’t consider the revolution an error and a crime. Although we weren’t into that Marxist-Leninist stuff either. The Revolution was something abstract to us... Most of all, I remember the holidays and the anticipation leading up to them. I remember it all very vividly... Huge crowds of people out in the streets. Words roaring from the loudspeakers: there were some who believed in them wholeheartedly, others who believed only some of them, and some who didn’t believe them at all. But overall, everybody seemed happy. There was music everywhere. My mother was young and beautiful. Everyone was together... I remember all this as happiness... Those smells, those sounds... The bang of the typewriter keys, the morning cries of the milkmaids who would come into town from the countryside, “*Mo-lo-ko! Mo-lo-ko!*” Not everyone had a refrigerator, so people kept jars of milk out on their balconies. String bags full of raw chickens hung from the window frames. People decorated their windows, filling the space between two windowpanes with glittery cotton and green apples. The stray-cat smell wafting up from the basements... And how about the inimitable bleach-and-rag smell of Soviet cafeterias? These things may seem unrelated, but for me, they have all merged into a single sensation. A unified feeling. Freedom has different smells... different images... Everything about it is different. One of my friends, after her first trip abroad—this was already when Gorbachev was in power... she returned with the words “freedom smells like a good sauce.” I remember my first supermarket, it was in Berlin: a hundred different kinds of salami, a hundred different cheeses. It was baffling.

*Svetlana Alexievich, from Secondhand Time. In high school Alexievich moved from Ukraine to Belarus, where she later began working as a reporter. She was charged with defamation for her treatment of the Soviet-Afghan war in her book Zinky Boys but was acquitted; from 2000 until 2011 she lived in exile. After the disputed 2020 reelection of Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko, she helped form the opposition’s Coordination Council for the Transfer of Power; before she left for Berlin a few months later, she had been the last member remaining in the country who had not been detained by the government.*

of it, but it's not really relevant to the matter under discussion. I worked, I struggled, I earned money. I worked harder, I struggled harder, I earned more money. In the end, I earned a lot of money. I must confess, my friend, that I did not worry about the means; I used whatever means I could—sequestration, financial sophistry, unfair competition. So what? Was I supposed to worry about means when I was combating social fictions that were both immoral and unnatural? I was working for freedom, and I had to use what weapons I could to combat tyranny. The foolish anarchist who throws bombs and shoots people knows that he is killing people, while also knowing that his doctrines do not include the death penalty. He attacks one form

*Freedom is not something that anybody can be given; freedom is something people take, and people are as free as they want to be.*

—James Baldwin, 1961

of immorality by committing a crime because he believes that immorality is worthy of a crime if it is to be destroyed. His course of action is foolish because, as I've already shown, in anarchist terms, that course of action is wrong-headed and counterproductive; as far as the morality of that course of action is concerned, however, it is intelligent. Now, the course of action I followed was correct and, as an anarchist, I legitimately used all possible means to grow rich. I have realized the limited dream of a practical, clear-thinking anarchist. I am free. I do what I want, within limits of course. My motto as an anarchist was 'freedom,' so fine, I have freedom, the kind of freedom that our imperfect society allows one to have. I wanted to combat social fictions, so I did and, what's more, I beat them."

"Hang on, hang on," I said. "That's all very well, but there's something you've missed out. The conditions of your course of action were, as you yourself proved, not only to create freedom but also to not create tyranny. You did create tyranny. As a sequestrator, as a banker, as an

unscrupulous financier—forgive me, but you yourself used such terms—you created tyranny. You've created as much of a tyranny as any other representative of the social fictions that you claim to fight."

"No, my boy, you're wrong. I didn't create any tyranny. The tyranny that could have resulted from my struggle against social fictions is a tyranny that does not come from me and therefore I did not create it. It is intrinsic to the social fictions themselves, and I did not add to it. That tyranny is the tyranny intrinsic to all social fictions, and I could not, nor did I try to, destroy any social fictions. For the hundredth time I repeat: only a social revolution can destroy social fictions; until that time, a perfect anarchist course of action like mine can only subjugate the social fictions, and subjugate them only in relation to the anarchist who follows that course of action, because it does not allow for those fictions to be subjugated for long. It is not a question of not creating a tyranny, but of not creating a *new* tyranny, creating a tyranny where there was none before. Anarchists working together, influencing one another, as I said, create among themselves a new tyranny, quite apart from the tyrannies of existing social fictions. I did not create such a tyranny. Given the conditions of my particular course of action, I could not have done so. No, my friend, I created only freedom. I freed one person. I freed myself. Because my course of action—which, as I proved to you before, was the only true anarchist course of action—did not allow me to free anyone else. The one person I was able to free, I freed."

**Fernando Pessoa, from "The Anarchist Banker."**

Pessoa attended school in South Africa and then returned to Lisbon. Unable to afford university tuition, he wrote for newspapers and created various heteronyms, pseudonymous personae that he used in his writing as well as in his personal life; one heteronym was a doctor supposedly treating Pessoa for mental illness who said, "Fernando Pessoa doesn't exist, strictly speaking." Pessoa published this story, his longest, in 1922. He referred to it as a "dialectical satire" and intended to make it the main story in a collection called *Antitheses*, which he never completed.



## C. 1615: Lima

### SUBJECT TO CHANGE

In our religion, it is the poor sinner who ought to be favored above all others. Yet we have often seen such wretches condemned by choleric judges through no fault of their own. To put it more plainly, they have been dispatched by madmen, fools, and irresponsibles to execution by hanging, beheading, shooting with arrows, or strangling, innocent as they were of any crime. There was the case of the viceroy Francisco Toledo, who took it upon himself to execute the Inca ruler Túpac Amaru. Toledo was nothing but a soldier of fortune, diseased with pride, but he killed a king. This sentence was unacceptable according to any principle of

right and justice; and so was the punishment of the leading nobles. The title of Inca is such an exalted one that, even if Túpac Amaru had really rebelled against Spanish rule, it would have been wrong to affront or punish him in any way. Toledo was mistaken in setting himself up as a judge over a king of Peru. How would he have liked it if he in his turn had been sentenced by a judge from Spain and executed on the same scaffold?

Although the Incas may have begun as barbarians, and although their lineage was derived from a woman, Mama Huaco Coya, their dynasty developed over a very long period of time. My grandfather serves as the model of a great king reigning over the Four Quarters. In a similar manner Your Majesty ought to preside over the four parts of the world, with four

*Arion on a Dolphin (detail), engraving after Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem, by Jan Muller, c. 1590.*







Printing at Peking University, Beijing, 1989. Photograph by Stuart Franklin.

lesser kings under your way. As one of those I offer my son, who is a true prince of Peru.

Our Indians ought not to be thought of as backward people who yielded easily to superior force. Just imagine, Your Majesty, being an Indian in your own country and being loaded up as if you were a horse, or driven along with a succession of blows from a stick. Imagine being called a dirty pig or a goat. Imagine having your women and your property taken away from you without any semblance of legality. What would you and your Spanish compatriots do in these circumstances? My own belief is that you would eat your tormentors alive and enjoy the experience.

The Spaniards, hardly less unfortunate and just as poor, ran all sorts of risks in their voyage across the sea from Castile. Their aim was to compensate themselves by stealing all we had. But it ought not to be forgotten that when the emperor's ambassadors arrived on our shores they asked for peace and friendship. From that time to this, the Peruvian Indians have remained broadly loyal to Your Majesty. By contrast, the Indians of Chile have fought for their lands and the Christians have been

unable to conquer and settle them; nor are they likely to succeed, because of the immense effort that such a settlement would involve. In view of all this, Your Majesty ought to favor the claims of Peru and give support to our Indian chiefs, who can be counted upon as faithful subjects. Apart from Your Majesty, they are the people with the most right to possession of the country.

It is not the Spanish administrators and employers who are the rightful owners of Peru. According to the laws of both God and man, we Indians are the proprietors. With the exception of Your Majesty alone, the Spaniards are only foreign settlers. It is our country because God has given it to us. We are the masters.

**Felipe Guáman Poma de Ayala**, from Letter to a King. Born into an elite Incan family, Guáman Poma worked as an administrator for the Spanish colonial government in Peru. Amid a lawsuit over land titles, he was accused of misrepresenting his lineage and forced into exile for two years. The experience drew his attention to the colonial administration's mistreatment of indigenous people, and he composed this 1,200-page text in response. Guáman Poma worked on it between 1567 and 1615, writing in Quechua-influenced Spanish.



# 1930: Washington, DC

## DIN AND TONIC

This Prohibition thing has weakened the fiber and structure of our government and alienated hundreds of thousands of its most passionately loyal citizens, and sent them scuttling to live in Europe. Heaven knows how many would go if they could, and heaven knows how many men have had their feelings completely tempered by the belief they are overridden. I do not drink; I do not care to drink; that is not what I object to.

It has seriously injured scores of businesses, enormously increased the cost of government, and at the same time robbed that government of one of its greatest sources of revenue. It has put the liquor traffic—and the worst of the traffic that used to be associated with the liquor traffic—outside the law, where it and they can no longer be regulated by law.

It has imperiled our foreign relations and made us the laughingstock of the rest of the world. There is nothing that is as funny a joke throughout the world, at the present time, as the so-called American freedom. No country is as free as it was before we fought to make the world free for democracy, but there is no country that does not regard itself as free in comparison with the United States. It has weakened the moral fiber and the sense of personal responsibility of our people, driven them from a generally harmless relaxation to orgiastic relief in sex and crime and violence, and I beg of you to think of that phase, which I admit is not a legislative phase.

It has made liquor an obsession and a psychosis, the most important topic in America and almost the only one that concerns us with our government. It has occupied our government with affairs that are none of its business; brought it in to sit with us at dinner and by our hearthstone; filled us with an irritating consciousness of being watched, ruled, and verboten. No government is any good that fills its

citizens with that feeling. The best government in the world, throughout all history, is the government that governs least and of which the people have the least consciousness. When the people feel conscious of their government, it should look out.

It has committed us to the theory that several million pounds of prevention are worth an ounce of cure; that it is right to deprive millions of people of what they have used wisely and temperately in order to keep a few

*Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.*

—Edmund Burke, 1791

thousands from using it foolishly and intemperately. That is the theory of this law, and it has alarmed us with logical fear of extension, so that we, who have been forbidden a glass of beer today, may be forbidden tobacco or coffee tomorrow—or beefsteak because immoderate meat eating creates uric acid; or automobiles because the auto has made getting away easier for the criminal.

There is no limit to which this law may not be carried in its prying officiousness. If the law is right in principle, there is nothing in what you do today that may not be forbidden tomorrow.

**Channing Pollock**, from a statement given to Congress during a hearing about Prohibition. Pollock began his career in 1898 as a drama critic for the Washington Post and later worked as a stage manager and press agent before turning to playwriting. "Before Prohibition I never saw a bottle of liquor in a theater before in my life...at the present moment, a dressing room without a bottle is almost as rare as a dressing room without a makeup box," he said in his testimony. "Before Prohibition a man got a drink when he wanted it. Now he wants a drink when he can get it."

## 1982: Johannesburg

### FRIEND OF MY ENEMY

Any government, however repressive, which declares itself opposed to communism and the alleged Soviet desire for global hegemony becomes a blue-eyed boy of the Washington administration. It therefore was certainly no accident that the very first head of state to be welcomed by President Reagan after his inauguration should have headed the ghastly and repressive regime of South Korea, where many Christian leaders, among others, are languishing in jail for opposing the totalitarian rule of their overlords. This is described as enlightened self-interest, but the victims of injustice and oppression all over the world are appalled when the leader of the free world gives respectability and the stamp of approval to those who are perpetrators of some of the most vicious systems in the world. It seems almost bizarre that a country founded on principles of justice and freedom—when the

thirteen colonies found it intolerable to be subject to imperialist Britain—should so often be found hobnobbing with the world's most unfree governments. It is quite incredible that the U.S. should be able to prop up regimes that are so repressive and unjust that those who have been killed to maintain these governments in power cry out to heaven to be avenged. The stink of their corpses is an affront to decency, and in the minds of simpletons it is all possible because of U.S. support for the strangulation of freedom in their several countries. Just look at what is happening in El Salvador and other parts of Latin America. Isn't the price of enlightened self-interest in fact too high to pay for the alienation of indigenous peoples of these lands, who are groaning under the yoke of corrupt and vicious men aided and abetted by the most powerful nation in the West? The U.S. record in the matter of upholding human rights and justice in other lands is abysmal—what a paradox! It seems to me that self-interest, whether it be that of a nation or an individual, is ultimately self-stultifying,

*Parrot Outside His Cage, by Cornelis Biltius, mid-seventeenth century.*





as our Lord indicated it would be. We are talking after all of those who make a great play of their Christianity and not about pagans.

South Africa realized quite quickly that she was on to a good thing when she declared herself firmly and with alacrity as the last bastion of Western Christian civilization, a bulwark against the almost inexorable advance of predatory communism. She had a Suppression of Communism Act on her statute book before you could say "Joe McCarthy." Foreigners did not stop to check on the definition of communism contained in this piece of legislation, nor did they become skeptical when its provisions were being used against committed Christians who just happened to be implacable opponents of apartheid. No, it was enough that there was this pugnacious ally who would keep the sea lanes free of Soviet influence. Similarly, the South African government's insistence on the use of the term *terrorist* to apply to those whom others designate *freedom fighter* or at least *insurgent* is not merely accidental. The free world is plagued by terrorists, in Ulster, in West Germany, in Italy especially, and it is fed up with those whom it considers lawless louts. They do not stop to consider the difference between those who have legitimate channels for expressing their views which they refuse to use and those who have hardly any such means. And so the U.S. is intent on retaining South Africa as an ally, despite the cost to its own credibility in the eyes of the Third World of not distancing itself from the international pariah for her obnoxious racial policy.

We have been deeply hurt. We have seen that when it comes to the matter of Black freedom then we Blacks are really expendable in the view of the mighty U.S. It was a case of blood being thicker than water. You can't really trust Whites. When it comes to the crunch, whatever the morality involved, Whites will stick by their fellow Whites. At least under the Carter administration our morale was upheld by their encouraging rhetoric of disapproval. They did not, as is happening now, lend respectability to a horrible system.

## 1789: London

### THE SENSE OF AN ENDING

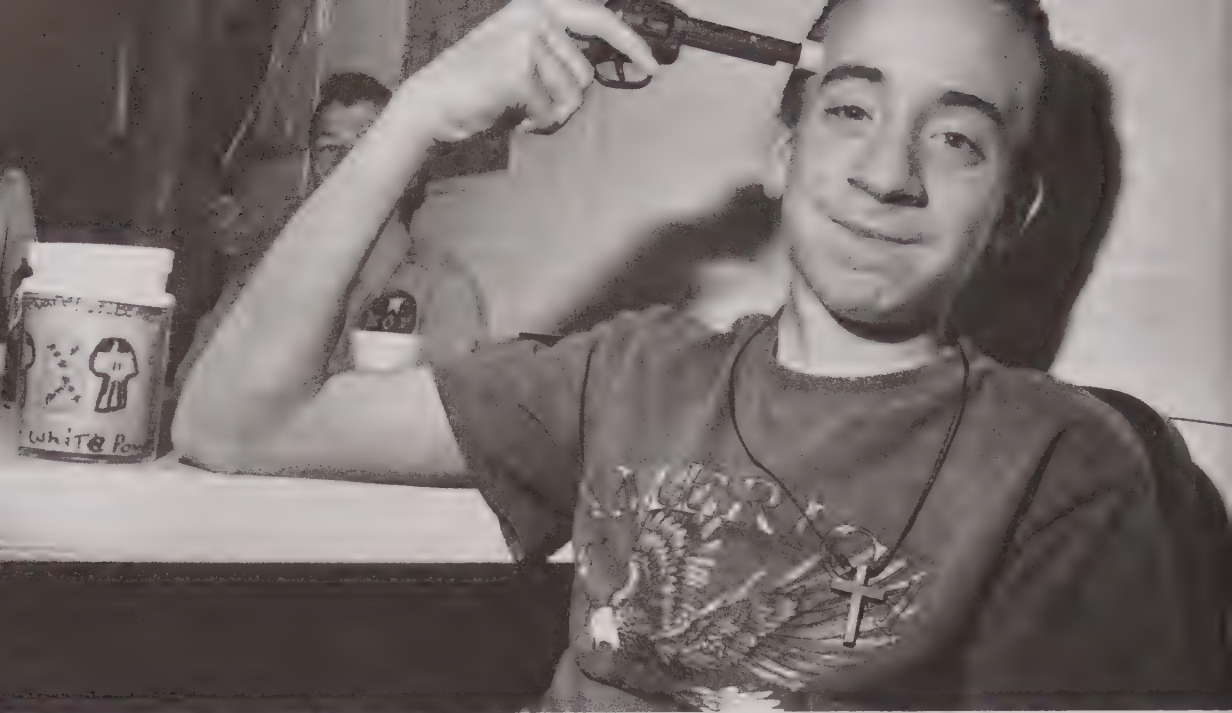
You touch me on a very tender part when you say my friends on your side of the water "cannot be reconciled to the idea of my resigning my adopted America, even for my native England." They are right. Though I am in as elegant style of acquaintance here as any American that ever came over, my heart and myself are three thousand miles apart; and I had rather see my horse Button in his own stable, or eating the grass of Bordentown or Morrisania, than see all the pomp and show of Europe.

A thousand years hence (for I must indulge in a few thoughts), perhaps in less, America may be what England now is! The innocence of her character that won the hearts of all nations in her favor may sound like a romance, and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruins of that liberty which thousands bled for, or suffered to obtain, may just furnish materials for a village tale or extort a sigh from rustic sensibility, while the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall deride the principle and deny the fact.

When we contemplate the fall of empires and the extinction of nations of the ancient world, we see but little to excite our regret than the moldering ruins of pompous palaces, magnificent monuments, lofty pyramids, and walls and towers of the most costly workmanship. But when the empire of America shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass or marble can inspire. It will not then be said, Here stood a temple of vast antiquity; here rose a Babel of invisible height; or there a palace of sumptuous extravagance; but here, ah painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of freedom rose and fell!

Read this and then ask if I forget America.

**Thomas Paine**, from a letter to Kitty Nicholson Few. Paine left London for America in 1774 with letters of introduction from Benjamin Franklin, and over the next two years he worked on his pamphlet *Common Sense*. Nicholson, whose father had been a captain in the Continental Navy, met Paine when she was a schoolgirl; they exchanged several letters until their estrangement, a result of Paine's public criticism of religion. Paine sent for Nicholson as he was dying, but he rejected her attempts to recite from the Bible by his deathbed.



Attendee at the Ku Klux Klan's Faith and Freedom Conference, Zinc, Arkansas, 2009. Photograph by Bruce Gilden.

We asked, and continue to ask, the international community to apply political, diplomatic, but above all economic pressure on the South African authorities to persuade them to come to the conference table to work out a solution for our crisis before it is too late. It is our only chance of a reasonably peaceful solution. For advocating this I have lost my passport for a second time. Constructive engagement can't even get that returned.

The U.S. government gave us an eloquent spiel on the general ineffectiveness of sanctions, that they had to be applied by several countries at the same time, etc., etc. There might have been merit in these observations, but they lost all credibility for us. Why? Well, when the Polish government applied martial law in Poland, who applied sanctions—and unilaterally at that? Why, it was the selfsame U.S. that can't see its way to doing half of what it did against the Polish government and the Russians. The U.S. government does not really care about Blacks. Poles are different. They are White.

Our people are rapidly despairing of a peaceful resolution in South Africa. Those of us who still speak "peace" and "reconciliation" belong to a rapidly diminishing minority. And if

they decide to fight, they know they can't go to the West for support. So we are paradoxically being driven into the arms of the Soviets to get our arms, by the very country that is concerned about Soviet expansionism.

Freedom is coming. We will be free whatever anybody does or does not do about it. We are concerned only about *how* and *when*. It should be soon, and we want it to be reasonably peaceful. When we are free South Africa will still be of strategic importance and her natural resources will still be of strategic significance and we will remember who helped us to get free. The Reagan administration is certainly not on that list. Will your CIA now be out to get me?

**Desmond Tutu**, from *"Black South African Perspectives and the Reagan Administration."* When Ronald Reagan entered office, he reversed several of Jimmy Carter's sanctions on South Africa, allying with the apartheid government under a policy of "constructive engagement" with whites, a decision Tutu called an "abomination." Reagan's assistant secretary of state for African affairs declared that "it is not our task to choose between black and white," to which Tutu responded, "It is small comfort to a mouse, if an elephant is standing on its tail, to say, 'I am impartial.'"



## 1856: Paris

### INHERENT CHARM

The French had begun to want to take charge for themselves. It had become apparent that the great revolution to which everything was leading would take place not only with the consent of the people but also by their own hands.

From that moment on, I think this radical revolution—which would consign all that was worst along with all that was best in the ancien régime to the same ruin—was inevitable. People so ill-prepared to act for themselves could hardly expect to reform everything at once without destroying everything. An absolute monarch would have been a less dangerous innovator. This revolution destroyed so many institutions, ideas, and habits inimical to liberty, but it also did away with others that liberty can hardly do without. Had it been carried out by a despot, it might have left us less unprepared to become a free nation than we were after it had been carried out by the people in the name of their own sovereignty.

Anyone who wants to understand our revolution must never lose sight of this.

When the French rediscovered their love of political liberty, they had already conceived certain ideas about government that were not only difficult to reconcile with the existence of free institutions but almost hostile to them.

They had embraced the ideal of a society in which the sole aristocracy would consist of public officials and a single, all-powerful administration would control the state and be the guardian of individuals. Although they wished to be free, they had no intention of abandoning this fundamental idea. They merely attempted to reconcile it with the idea of liberty.

Hence, they sought to combine unlimited administrative centralization with a preponderant legislative body: bureaucratic administration and representative government. The nation as a body enjoyed all the rights of sovereignty, but each individual citizen was gripped in the

tightest dependency. The experience and virtues of a free people were required of the former, the qualities of a good servant of the latter.

It was this desire to introduce political liberty amid institutions and ideas that were alien or opposed to it, but to which we were accustomed or inclined to be drawn, that for sixty years yielded so many vain attempts at free government. It was followed by so many tragic revolutions that in the end—exhausted by so much effort and repelled by such laborious and sterile labor—many of the French abandoned their second aim in order to revert to the first. This reduced them to the thought that living as equals under a master still had a certain charm after all.

*Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.*

—John Adams, 1814

I have often asked myself what the source is of the passion for political liberty that has led in all ages to man's greatest accomplishments. In what sentiments is it rooted? From where does it draw its nourishment?

I see clearly that when nations are badly led, they readily conceive the desire to govern themselves. But this kind of love of independence, which is born only of certain specific and temporary evils that despotism brings in its wake, never lasts. It vanishes with the accident that gave it birth. People seemed to love liberty, but it turns out they only hated the master. What a people who are made to be free hate is the evil of dependence itself.

Nor do I think that a genuine love of liberty ever arises out of the sole prospect of material rewards, for that prospect is often barely perceptible. It is indeed true that in the long run liberty always brings comfort and well-being and often wealth to those who are able to preserve it. At times, however, it temporarily hinders the use of such goods. At other times despotism alone can ensure their fleeting enjoyment. Those who



Ariel, illustration by Arthur Rackham from a 1926 edition of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

prize liberty only for the material benefits it offers have never kept it for long.

What has always kindled such a powerful love of liberty in the hearts of certain men is its intrinsic attractiveness, its inherent charm, independent of its benefits. It is the pleasure of being able to speak, act, and breathe without constraint under the sole government of God and the law. Whoever seeks in liberty anything other than liberty itself is born for servitude.

Some people pursue it doggedly through peril and misery of every variety. What they love about it is not the material goods it gives them. They consider liberty itself a good so precious and so necessary that nothing else can console them for its loss, while savoring it consoles them for everything else. Others tire of it amid their riches. They allow it to be plucked from their hands without resistance for fear that any effort to hold on to it

will compromise the well-being they owe to it. What do such people lack to remain free? What? The very desire to be free. Do not ask me to analyze that sublime desire; you must feel it. It finds its way unaided into great hearts that God has prepared to receive it. It fills them; it inflames them. To mediocre souls that have never felt it, one cannot hope to make it comprehensible.

**Alexis de Tocqueville**, from *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*. *Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont were sent to the United States in 1831 to study the American penal system on behalf of the French government. This journey, Tocqueville wrote, was an "honorable pretext" for a larger study, published in two parts in 1835 and 1840 as Democracy in America. By 1856 Tocqueville was less optimistic, claiming in The Ancien Régime that democracy was "an unknown power" that could create societies suffering from "the greatest difficulty in escaping absolute government."*



## C. 420 BC: Eleusis

### OPEN FOR COMMENTS

[Enter a herald from Thebes.]

*Herald:* What man is master in this land? To whom must I give the word I bring from Creon, ruler in Cadmus' country since Eteocles fell at his brother Polynices' hand beside the seven-mouthed gates?

*Theseus:* One moment, stranger.  
Your start was wrong, seeking a master here.  
This city is free, and ruled by no one man.  
The people reign, in annual alternations.  
And they do not yield the power to the rich;  
the poor man has an equal share in it.

*Herald:* That one point gives the better of the game to me. The town I come from is controlled by one man, not a mob. And there is no one to puff it up with words, for private gain, swaying it this way, that way. Such a man first flatters it with wealth of favors; then he does it harm, but covers up his blunders by blaming other men, and goes scot-free. The people are no right judge of arguments, so how can they give right guidance to a city? For time, not speed, gives better understanding. A poor man, working hard, could not attend to public matters, even if ignorance were not his birthright. When a wretch, a nothing, obtains respect and power from the people by talk, his betters sicken at the sight.

*Theseus:* What bombast from a herald! Waster of words, if it is argument you want—and you yourself have set the contest going—listen. Nothing is worse for a city than an absolute ruler. For first, if so, there are no common laws: one man has power and makes the law his own; there's no equality. With written laws, people of small resources and the rich

## The Talk

*How we communicate about reproductive freedom*

Despite an increase in legal punishments for women who sought birth control and abortions across much of Europe, the twelfth-century nun **Hildegard of Bingen** shared remedies for “retention of the menses” in her medical texts. This way of classifying the drugs, historian Etienne van de Walle wrote in 1997, “created a zone of opportunity for women who resolved to terminate a pregnancy.”

When copying manuscripts of Dioscorides’ first-century medico-botanical handbook *De materia medica*, medieval scribes sometimes added marginal comments noting any purported contraceptive or abortifacient properties unmentioned in the original text. Around 1310 **Peter of Abano** added a note to the entry concerning an herb called *asarus*, explaining that “uninformed people” take it before sex to prevent conception.

Often calling themselves fortune-tellers and astrologists, nineteenth-century sellers of contraception and abortifacients resorted to euphemisms and redactions to advertise their wares. An 1839 advertisement in the *New York Sun* described a pill designed to “produce a \*\*\*\*\*n”; later in the century, birth-control advocate **Edward Bliss Foote** advertised an abortion implement as an “impregnating syringe” meant for “married women only.”

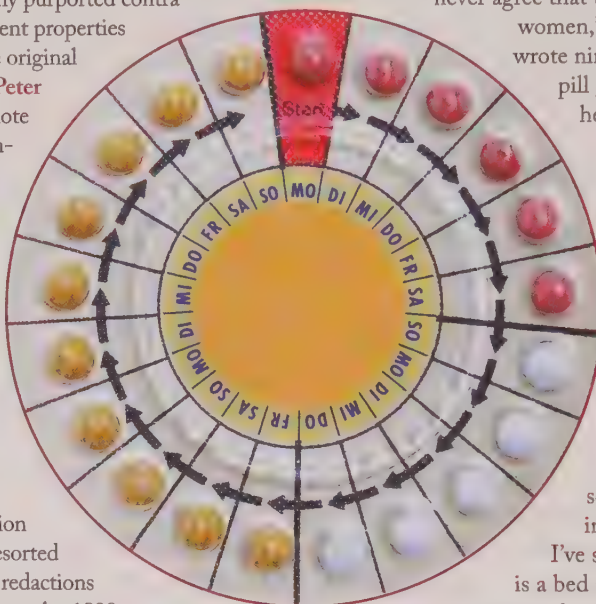
An 1873 law named for anti-obscenity campaigner Anthony Comstock deemed information about contraception too obscene for publication. Activist **Angela Heywood** argued against the law in an 1893 article: “Is it ‘proper,’ ‘polite,’ for men, real *he* men, to go to Washington to say, by penal law, fines, and imprisonment, whether woman may continue her natural right to wash, rinse, or wipe out her own vaginal body opening—as well as legislate when she may blow her nose, dry her eyes, or nurse her babe?”

In 1933 birth-control activist **Margaret Sanger** deliberately broke a law prohibiting the importation of contraceptives by having 120 barrier devices sent from Japan to one of her clinics. In the resulting *United States v. One Package of Japanese Pessaries*, a federal judge ruled in the clinic’s favor, arguing that the pessaries “might also be capable of legitimate uses.”

The FDA approved the first commercially available birth-control pill in 1960. “I would never agree that the pill really liberates women,” **Toni Cade Bambara** wrote nine years later, “but the pill gives her choice, gives her control over at least some of the major events in her life. And it gives her time to fight for liberation in those other areas.”

Many American country-music radio stations refused to play **Loretta Lynn’s** 1975 song “The Pill,” which includes the lyrics “All I’ve seen of this old world is a bed and a doctor bill / I’m tearing down your brooder house ‘cause now I’ve got the pill.” Lynn said in an interview that rural doctors told her the song “had done more to promote rural acceptance of birth control than any official medical or social-services efforts.”

In 1996 **Bill Clinton** signed into law a \$250 million federal program offering states funding over five years to establish and support abstinence-only sex-education programs in public schools. The only state to refuse the funding in the program’s first year was California. In subsequent years fifteen additional states refused further funding, opting instead to return to comprehensive sex-education curricula that cover the proper use of birth-control methods.





both have the same recourse to justice. So  
a man of means, if badly spoken of,  
will have no better standing than the weak,  
and if the little man is right, he wins  
against the great. This is the call of freedom:  
“What man has good advice to give the city,  
and wishes to make it known?” He who responds  
gains glory; the reluctant may hold their peace.  
For the city, what can be more fair than that?  
Again, when the people are master in the land,  
they welcome youthful townsmen as their subjects.  
But when one man is king, he finds this hateful,  
and if he thinks that any of the nobles  
are smart, he fears for his despotic power  
and kills them. How can a city become strong  
if someone takes away, cuts off bold youths  
like ears of corn in a spring field? What use  
to build a fortune, if your work promotes  
the despot’s welfare, not your family’s?  
Why bring up girls well and modestly, fit  
for marriage, if tyrants may take them for their pleasure—  
a grief to parents? I would rather die  
than see my children forced to such a union.  
These are the responses I shoot at what you say.  
What have you come to ask of this, our country?  
You talk too much; you would regret your visit  
had not a city sent you. Messengers  
should state their mission promptly, then depart.  
I hope that henceforth, to my city, Creon  
sends a less wordy messenger than you.

**Euripides**, from *The Suppliant Women*. Because of an oracle’s prediction at his birth foreseeing athletic conquests in his future, Euripides was trained in boxing as a child. Around 455 BC he was selected to produce a play in the festival of Dionysus; he was provided with a chorus to perform in his tragedy *Daughters of Pelias*. Euripides went on to win the festival’s first prize four times during his lifetime and once posthumously. It is said that he left Athens in 408 BC to join the court of King Archelaus in Macedonia, perhaps to escape public ridicule from Aristophanes.





# A PARADISE FOR ALL

by Astra Taylor

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One March day in 1742, a very unusual man set up a table on a busy Philadelphia street. Benjamin Lay was sixty-one years old, wore humble homespun clothes, and sported a long beard. His head was large and his eyes luminous, but his posture and height immediately set him apart: he had a stooped back and stood a little over four feet tall. He carefully laid out a few tea-cups and saucers, delicate objects that had been treasured by his wife before she passed away, and then proceeded to smash them with a hammer, crushing the dishes with dramatic flair. With each loud blow, bits of ceramic flying, he denounced the “tyrants” in India and the Caribbean who mistreated the workers who harvested the tea and enslaved the people who produced the sugar that his Pennsylvania neighbors consumed.

Oblivious to his words, passersby responded to his deeds with shock and indig-

nation. Some implored Lay to hand over the porcelain wares for safekeeping, while others offered to purchase the set or dashed to grab the cups to spare them abuse. A group of young men picked Lay up and threw him to the ground before hauling him away to prevent him from committing further violence against property. Unwittingly, they all became players in Lay’s performance, illustrating his moral point. Philadelphians cared more passionately about the safety and sanctity of objects than they did about that of other human beings.

Born in 1682 in Essex, England, to a Quaker family of modest means, Benjamin Lay possessed—or perhaps more accurately, was possessed by—an unshakable moral conviction that compelled him to follow his conscience, even as it led him to live a deeply unconventional, and in many ways uncomfortable, life. In England

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he was disowned by two Quaker communities for accusing religious leaders of covetousness; Lay saw the community's rising wealth and materialism as anathema to the Society of Friends' commitment to equality. In Pennsylvania, where he moved in 1732, his truth-telling and deepening antislavery militancy got him disowned twice more.

Decades before the Bill of Rights was ratified, Lay's speech was remarkably free. It was also creative. His brazen self-expression was undoubtedly unique, but it was not without precedent. In the decades prior to his birth, Lay's home county of Essex had been a hotbed of political protest and religious rebellion. During the English Revolution, radical sects

*It is the individual man*

*In his individual freedom who can mature*

*With his warm spirit the unripe world.*

—Christopher Fry, 1946

including the Diggers, Ranters, Seekers, and Levelers deployed spectacular tactics to challenge established authority and liberate the individual. Quakerism was part of this emancipatory efflorescence, emphasizing God's presence in each person, including women, through what adherents understood to be an inner light. By elevating the spiritual experience and moral conscience of the individual, Quakerism demoted traditional clergy and undermined social hierarchy. Friends dressed in a simple style and flouted convention—behavior that led to their persecution in England and in the colonies before the Society became more established.

Lay knew this history well, and his protests harked back to this rich tradition of dissent. His guerrilla theater was calibrated to shock and persuade. Above all, he sought to expose the hypocrisy and vanity of the Quaker elders and ministers who owned people—how could a faith that preaches pacifism be reconciled to the theft and torture of human beings believed to be possessed of an inner light?—and to highlight the avarice and violence that ownership entailed.

By doing this, he revealed the complicity of the broader community, which he felt had lost touch with its core values: commitments to equality, nonviolence, and the Golden Rule above all. He did so by making a scene at every opportunity. During worship, Lay would vehemently denounce any slaveholders who spoke, sometimes from the women's section, where he occasionally sat in subversion of ossifying gender norms. One Sunday morning he stood shoeless in the snow outside the meetinghouse. When Friends passed by and expressed worry that he might catch cold, Lay replied that they should extend the same concern to the "poor slaves in your fields, who go all winter half clad." Another time, Lay aimed to teach a lesson to neighbors who owned a young Black girl by entertaining their son at his home for an entire day, unbeknownst to the parents. When the couple approached Lay in a panic, convinced their child was lost, he called the boy over. Perhaps now, Lay told them, they could imagine the anguish of the girl and her family.

In England Lay had met and married Sarah Smith, a talented and respected minister who, like her husband, was a little person, and she remained in good standing with the Society of Friends until the end of her life. In 1735, after seventeen years of marriage, Sarah died of unknown causes. Lay threw himself even further into his abolitionist mission, escalating his political activism and embracing ascetism. In Abington, a hamlet eight miles north of Philadelphia, while residing in a rustic cottage he had constructed out of a small cave, he wrote a groundbreaking book and redoubled his attacks on the "man-stealers" and miscreants he despised.

As a youth in England, Lay worked as a shepherd and glove-maker before joining the crew of a ship at age twenty-one, traveling to the Mediterranean and beyond. His twelve-year stint as a sailor helped radicalize him. On perilous journeys, Lay's fellow seafarers recounted tales of their own enslavement in Turkey and described the terrible cruelty and rape of African people that they had observed—and perhaps participated in—on slave-trading ves-



sels. Years later, Lay and his wife bore firsthand witness to the horrors of bondage during an eighteen-month stint running a small store in Barbados, where there was a small Quaker community that included slaveholders. “The poor Blacks would come to our shop and store, hunger-starv’d, almost ready to perish with hunger and sickness,” Lay recounts. They got to know stolen Africans as individuals and saw what he called “their bright genius.” Lay wrote that their new friends seemed to “rejoice” when they saw Lay and his wife together, “we being pretty much alike in stature and other ways,” and the aid they offered was deeply appreciated, too. Among the enslaved people they befriended was a talented cooper who chose suicide rather than face another unprovoked Monday-morning beating.

Nine out of ten people on Barbados were held as chattel; in Philadelphia, a Quaker hub, the figure was reversed. Yet while slavery was less pervasive in Pennsylvania, there, as in Barbados, Friends tormented the people they held as property, forcing them to perform hard and thankless agricultural and domestic work while themselves professing biblical devotion and dedication to nonviolence. Lay found these individuals contemptible, satanic even, and he told them as much to their faces, over and over and over again.

Lay’s irrepressible truth-telling and theatrical antics could be revelatory for those willing to reflect and learn, but it reliably enraged his elite targets. A true revolutionary, he believed that those at the top of the social, economic, racial, and spiritual hierarchy deserved, in fact, to be at the bottom. No surprise, then, that he was repeatedly punished for his zealotry, including being roughed up by fellow Friends on multiple occasions. Even when he was officially disowned, he fought doggedly to be reinstated and continued to show up at meetings to call out members’ impropriety, uninvited and unwanted as his presence may have been. After being kicked out of one gathering, Lay stretched out on the path just outside the doorway of the meetinghouse, forcing each attendee to step over his prone body as they

headed home. Despite his many tribulations, Lay never relented in his all-consuming mission: to turn Quakers against slavery. Through decades of difficult and isolating agitation, he prompted discussion and debate that persisted after his passing, forcing people to take sides on the issue and influencing a younger generation of abolitionists, who carried on his campaign within and beyond the faith (though typically by using less aggressive tactics). In 1758 the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting voted to begin a process that would, in time, censure and eventually disown slaveholders. “I can now die in peace,” Lay exclaimed. He soon fell gravely ill, drawing his final breath the following year at the age of seventy-seven.

*If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.*

—Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1843

During his lifetime and for a few decades after, Lay’s eccentricity, conviction, and brilliance made him locally famous, or at least infamous. Tales of his exploits were passed down as a kind of folklore. Two biographies published after his death introduced people outside Pennsylvania to the extraordinary life of Benjamin Lay. His first biographer was the renowned Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who observed that “there was a time when the name of this celebrated Christian philosopher was familiar to every man, woman, and to nearly every child in Pennsylvania.” The second account of Lay’s life was written by the early nineteenth-century lawyer and abolitionist Robert Vaux, who interviewed elderly Quakers who had known Lay when they were young; Vaux described his subject as a “comet, which threatens, in its irregular course, the destruction of the worlds near which it passes”—a comparison intended as a compliment. Despite this initial wave of notoriety, Lay soon fell into obscurity. The 2017 publication of *The Fearless Benjamin Lay*, a captivating biography by the



*Study for Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, or The Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks (detail), by Samuel Jennings, c. 1791.*

gifted historian Marcus Rediker, has prompted a much-needed revival and reassessment of Lay's electrifying legacy. In 2018, thanks in no small part to Rediker's dedication and advocacy, the four groups that had disowned Lay—the Abington Monthly Meeting, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the North London Area Meeting, and the Southern East Anglia Meeting—issued a joint statement acknowledging his mistreatment and contribution: “We hold that Benjamin Lay was a friend of the truth; we are in unity with the spirit of Benjamin Lay.”

As Rediker points out, Lay's contribution to the history of abolition was long overlooked for a variety of reasons: his confrontational and uncompromising tactics, the fact that he came from the lower class, and his unremitting radicalism. While Rediker finds no evidence that Lay thought of himself or his wife as inferior in any way, he shows that the couple faced discrimination and judgment for being little people. Lay's opponents lambasted his mind and his body, denouncing both his figure

and his ideas as deformed and deranged; even early historians of abolition, from whom one would expect more sympathy, dismissed him as a “little hunchback” and a “deviant personality.” Lay's experience of marginalization may have informed his empathy for others who were also unjustly underestimated and abused, whether they were Black people, women, or nonhuman animals. He refused to eat animal flesh or exploit animal labor, a commitment inspired by his reading of the Bible; the Greek philosopher Pythagoras; and his favorite book, Thomas Tryon's 1683 work *The Way to Health, Long Life, and Happiness*, which he often carried with him on his travels. His interracial, interspecies solidarity likely stemmed, at least in part, from the fact that he was often assumed by others to be diminished and unequal, even subhuman.

A man far ahead of his time, Lay had few allies and numerous enemies. The expansiveness of his moral vision made it unpalatable to many. His conception of justice transcended race, gender, nation, and species. Finding half



measures abhorrent, he insisted that liberation be immediate and absolute. “Lay,” Rediker writes, “demanded freedom *now*.” His profound conviction that freedom belongs to everyone equally—including the nonhuman animals with whom we share the earth—offered a very different conception of liberty than the one that dominates today, which puts freedom and equality at odds, like counterweights on a scale, making enemies of virtues that are, in truth, twinned. For Lay, freedom and equality were mutually reinforcing, the emancipation of one necessitating the emancipation of all.

Almost three centuries before the concept of intersectionality was introduced, Benjamin Lay’s politics fit the bill. A man from humble origins, he developed a worldview militantly opposed to hierarchy, pretense, and exploitation. His conviction that greed and money were unalloyed evils led him to recognize slavery and racial hierarchy’s profit-driven roots and to commit to a life of voluntary poverty. His refusal to exploit another being’s labor meant he walked long distances others would have traveled by horse or carriage. Later in life, inspired by ancient and medieval hermits and ascetics, he spun his own flax cloth (refusing to use wool) and subsisted on a diet of seasonal produce from his garden and water from a spring not far from his cave. By all accounts his dwelling was spartan but charming, the ceiling covered with evergreen sprigs of pine. It also housed a collection of over two hundred books, including an extensive Quaker library and volumes by some of Lay’s favorite thinkers, including ancient Cynic and Stoic philosophers and, of course, his beloved Tryon, whose writings connected the brutalization of animals with that of humans and advocated for a plant-based diet.

From his cave, Lay set about trying to understand and transform the wider world. Though he lacked formal schooling, he had learned to read and write during his seafaring years, taught by his shipmates. In Pennsylvania he worked as a bookseller. After Sarah died, he began compiling a book of his own. Lay knew that the Overseers of the Press, a committee

tasked with authorizing Quaker publications, would censor it—it was written specifically to turn the community against many elders and ministers—and so he asked his friend Benjamin Franklin to print the volume. The remarkable title is worth reproducing in full:

*All slave-keepers that keep the innocent in bondage: apostates pretending to lay claim to the pure & holy Christian religion, of what congregation soever, but especially in their ministers, by whose example the filthy leprosy and apostasy is spread far and near: it is a notorious sin which many of the true Friends of Christ and his pure truth, called Quakers, has been for many years and still are concern’d to write and bear testimony against as a practice so gross & hurtful to religion and destructive to government beyond what words can set forth, or can be declared of by men or angels, and yet lived in by ministers and magistrates in America.*

Published in 1738, the book was only North America’s fourth significant antislavery text—and certainly the most boundary-pushing yet. No prior treatise had been so universalist, unyielding, and outraged. The Overseers predictably condemned it, their official statement charging that it contained “gross abuses, not only against some of their members in particular, but against the whole society.”

Lay’s treatise ends with a message to a “courteous and friendly reader,” apologizing for errors and for “some passages in my book that are not so well placed as could have been wished,” and adds a humble plea to “remember that it was written by one that was a poor common sailor, and an illiterate man.” As Lay readily admits, *All Slave-Keepers* is not exactly linear. Collage-like in its presentation, the book is a series of thematically connected mis-sives. Reading them is reminiscent of researching a topic online and following a succession of links, with short chapters consisting of rational arguments for abolition, moving personal testimony and anecdotes, excerpts of texts by authors Lay admires, a brief defense of women

preachers (“Male and female are all one in Christ the Truth”), and more, all laced with a healthy dash of opprobrium aimed at corrupt, slaveholding ministers, whose “smooth” appearance and “feigned humility” enable them to “beguile unstable souls.” Biblical quotations, carefully selected to persuade those who claim to be devoted to the Lord’s teachings, make up a good portion of the book (and also prove rather heavy reading). The language is undeniably dense, the run-on sentences in need of pruning and punctuation. But in its most lucid and indignant passages, the prose has a modern flair. After all, nothing may be more popular these days than pointing out the moral failings and hypocrisy of others, and Lay catalogues moral failings and hypocrisy aplenty.

Lay also includes a short statement indicating the sweeping nature of his critique, proclaiming the text “written for a general service” by one who “sincerely desires the present and

eternal welfare and happiness of all mankind all the world over, of all colors, and nations.” The book shows how much this was a personal conviction. In a later section about his time at sea, Lay conveys the sense of stunned horror he felt as a young man upon hearing his shipmates’ stories of the slave trade. An account of his time in Barbados serves to reveal not just the nightmare of bondage but how and why the Lays were radicalized against it. Sarah fed their African visitors, inviting them in for meals; when they lacked anything else to give, even moldering food was eagerly accepted. The memory of people ravenously consuming “stinking biscuits” and “decayed fish” leads Lay to pinpoint the source of real rot: the island’s masters, “scum of the infernal pit, a little worse than the same that comes off their sugar when it is boiling, which is composed of grease, dirt, dung, and other filthiness, as it may be limbs, bowels, and excrements of the poor slaves and

## Fashion Police

*Clothing rules and regulations*

### • c. 300 BC: **Rhodes**

The sanctuary of Alectrone bans the wearing of shoes and clothing made of pigskin within its precinct. Violating the law necessitates ritual purification of the temples.

### • 92 BC: **Andania**

*Gynaikonomoi* (supervisors of women) report female priests of the Andania mystery cult breaching the cult’s regulations, which forbid the use of gold, hair accessories, or cloaks worth more than two hundred drachmas.

### 1363: **England** •

An edict issued by Edward III establishes strict class distinctions in fashion: yeomen and court servants cannot wear silk, silver, buttons, jewelry, or tunics.

### • c. 960: **China**

The ruler of the Southern Tang Kingdom has his favorite courtesan perform a “lotus dance” with her feet bound in silk to form the shape of crescent moons. Foot-binding becomes customary for high-status marriageable women.

### • c. 270: **Rome**

Under the emperor Aurelian, civilian men may not wear red, yellow, green, or white shoes.

### 1552: **London** •

The first school uniform is designed for the Christ’s Hospital school for orphans. Provided free to students, its trademark blue cloak comes to distinguish charity children from the rest of society.

### 1157: **Genoa** •

To promote austerity, Genoa’s first legal code bans the use of sable furs worth more than forty soldi.

### c. 1530: **Mesoamerica** •

Spanish colonialists institute a series of bans on imported finery, including silk, velvet, and lace. Indigenous women are forbidden from wearing gold or pearls unless they are married to a Spaniard.

300 BC

600

1500



beasts.” For the Lays, there was no shame in consuming spoiled food out of desperation; forcing other humans into that state is what made a person worthy of contempt. Defying those who thought Africans inferior, Lay is adamant that owning slaves is the true sign of “barbarity.” He lavishes particular scorn on formerly indentured servants who conveniently forget their own suffering and go on to procure human chattel, a callousness he deemed “intolerable.”

Over and over Lay exposes money and greed—covetousness—as the root of the problem at hand. “Why should any be so very earnestly bent about getting money? Doth any history mention anyone that was ever made good by riches?” he asks. “And by persons too that makes great appearance of sanctity in religious performances,” when, he writes, it is in fact mammon, “the most mischievous devil in all the world,” that motivates them. A century before

Karl Marx analyzed similar phenomena, Lay paints a picture of the nascent capitalist economy and the warping effect on the human psyche of the devouring, compulsive pursuit of profit:

These rich grown, ever poor, over wealthy, ever needy, ever grasping, never satisfied, brim-full yet always empty, ever laboring, yet always idle, ever diligent, yet always negligent, ever waking, yet eternally asleep, ever living, panting, and breathing, after more, more, more, a little more, I say ever living but eternally dead, and there let ’em lie and stink still, if they will not be awakened. But I had much rather they should.

These “great and high masters of misrule” must be challenged to rouse from their destructive slumber. Only by inviting their wrath, Lay says, might the earth “become a paradise again, to all people, as it is to some.”

• c. 1700: **Russia**

Peter the Great issues a series of laws requiring townspeople to wear European-style clothing, but peasants must continue to dress in traditional Russian garments.

• c. 1815: **Auburn, NY**

Among the penological innovations of New York’s second state prison are black-and-white-striped inmate uniforms. Over the following decades the Auburn system shapes prison policies nationwide.

• 1800: **France**

After the French Revolution, women must seek police permission to “dress like a man,” defined to include the wearing of trousers. The law is not officially repealed until 2013.

1927: **Iran** •

Reza Shah Pahlavi’s Uniform Dress Law requires all men who are neither clergy nor government employees to replace their traditional garb with a European suit and leather shoes.

1941: **Germany** •

When all Jews over the age of six are ordered to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing, Hitler’s Ministry of Propaganda also issues instructions for non-Jews interacting with badge-wearing individuals.

1863: **San Francisco** •

An anti-indecency law criminalizes anyone wearing “dress not belonging to his or her sex.” Delinquents must pay a fine of up to five hundred dollars, the equivalent of around seven thousand dollars in 2022.

2011: **France** •

The French National Assembly passes a “burka ban” that makes concealing one’s face in public punishable by a 150-euro fine or a mandatory class on citizenship. “This is not about security or religion,” insists the justice minister, “but respecting our republican principles.”

All people, not some. With those words—and through a lifetime of committed action on behalf of the enslaved and exploited—Lay challenged the conception of freedom that reigned supreme in his time and continues to influence ours. Constitutional scholar Aziz Rana has argued that since the colonial era American freedom has always possessed two faces: freedom and equality for a privileged subset of the population predicated on the unfreedom and subjugation of unlucky others. Lay rejected this formulation, insisting that freedom necessitates equality and that liberty, which he likens to life itself, belongs equally to everyone and must be extended to all without delay—a groundbreaking position in the early eighteenth century. For him there could be no freedom without equality, only the illusion of it. He also saw being in thrall to money and mammon as another form of bondage, the snare of covetousness trapping and corrupting the entire community.

In his magisterial *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, the Jamaican scholar Orlando

Patterson argues that conceptions of freedom have historically taken three forms: personal, sovereign, and civic. Personal freedom is the most basic: it is the ability to do as one pleases within the limits of other people's ability to do the same. Sovereign freedom, in contrast, is the freedom to do whatever one pleases to an individual or group: it is the freedom of absolute power, enjoyed by the tyrant and the slaveholder. In the decades after Lay's death, it would be the growing abolitionist movement that advanced civic freedom—the capacity to fully participate in public life—by institutionalizing the concept of equality before the law in the United States, an idea without precedent in antebellum jurisprudence. Lay's passionate opposition to the self-serving and Janus-faced notion of freedom embraced by slaveholders and settlers helped formulate and elevate this third freedom.

In his book, Lay repeatedly mentions that some of the thoughts he shares first came to his mind while he was working in his garden, in one case while “pulling up some weeds.” The image of

*The Wall Jumper*, by Gabriel Heimler, c. 1990. Photograph by Manuel Cohen.



www.gabriel-heimler.de

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a small, stooped old man, bending down to reach the ground and provide himself basic subsistence, is a visceral reminder that the freedom Lay chose and fought for was not an easy one. Unlike the indolent and entitled Quaker elders he battled, Lay required not leisure but labor to ensure his liberty. Living a life in accordance with his principles meant performing the backbreaking work slaveholders forced on others. He tended to his vegetable beds and fruit trees, carried water, wove cloth, and traveled on foot. Unlike too many self-proclaimed ethical consumers today, Lay was not building a private, purist paradise—an island of clean living in a corrupt sea. Rather, his refusal to consume unethical products was coupled with his efforts to alter society at large and to remake the unjust division of labor and labor's rewards perpetuated by the institution of slavery. His choices challenged those who encountered him by showing that it was indeed possible to live another way and to cause less harm.

Lay's remarkable life upsets the pat insistence, so common among apologists for the past, that we should not judge historical figures according to modern conceptions of right and wrong, because our forebears were products of their time, unexposed to and thus ignorant of ethical precepts that seem obvious today. His relentless, attention-grabbing agitation ensured that his unusual ideas circulated widely; in Rediker's words, his "confrontational methods made people talk." The men of renown Lay targeted tried to silence him, often with force; at one point, a constabulary was conscripted to keep him out of Philadelphia meetings. Nevertheless, two founders, Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush, admired him enough to publish his book and pen his biography, respectively. Franklin's wife commissioned a portrait of Lay, knowing that her husband would value it. The painting depicts a small, thoughtful-looking man with a gray beard and thin legs standing in front of a cave, a basket of fruit and nuts at his feet and a copy of Tryon's book in his hand. As Rediker notes, during the period when Lay fought for freedom for all, enslaved people were rising up across the Americas, their heroic but doomed rebellions invigorated by what Ed-

ward Trelawny, governor of Jamaica, called the "dangerous spirit of liberty." Too many powerful people refused to acknowledge the wisdom and righteousness of their enslaved and abolitionist contemporaries, responding with derision and violence instead of empathy and reason. For that, they should be harshly judged.

But what about us—who, by virtue of being born later, take many of Lay's ideas for granted? Even those of us who purport to believe in equality still live our lives complicit with structures of domination and exploitation that Lay would certainly find intolerable, and that we should find intolerable, too. Across our troubled and tumultuous world, growing contingents of white supremacists, nationalists, and reactionaries believe

*I prefer liberty with unquiet to slavery with quiet.*

—Sallust, c. 35 BC

that their freedom must be predicated on the explicit subjugation of others, be they poor people, Black people, brown people, immigrants, women, queer people, trans people, and nonhuman animals. Even some who profess liberal values scoff at those they deem too "woke," fearful that using people's preferred pronouns, calling out ableism, or challenging carnivory will discomfit individuals who hold more moderate views. Nearly three centuries on, Lay's inclusive universalism remains the most potent antidote to divide-and-conquer politics and counterproductive incrementalism. Fortunately, new forms of radical abolitionism are also gaining ground, including movements against racialized state violence that demand the defunding of the prison-industrial complex and reinvestment in education, jobs, physical and mental health care, and other essential social services. Today's abolitionism, like Lay's, recognizes freedom and equality as interconnected rights, not privileges, that must be enjoyed by all in order to be truly secured. Our age has more than its share of masters of misrule. What we need is an army of Benjamin Lays, fierce and compassionate, to knock them down a notch.



*Worldly and Nude, Freedom Against Oppression (detail), by Roberto Matta, 1986.*

# OUR MEDICAL LIBERTIES

by Nadja Durbach

On March 23, 1885, anti-vaccinators descended on the English city of Leicester to rally against the Vaccination Acts. Since 1853 these laws had mandated that all infants be vaccinated against smallpox. Parents who refused to comply were fined, imprisoned, or both. Between twenty thousand and a hundred thousand protesters came from all over Britain to join the march. The parade included parents who had served prison terms for noncompliance, a cart filled with unvaccinated children,

an open hearse bearing a child's coffin inscribed ANOTHER VICTIM OF VACCINATION, doctors riding backward on cows, and an effigy of vaccine pioneer Edward Jenner that was eventually hanged and decapitated. Participants carried banners declaring PURE BLOOD AND NO ADULTERATION and SANITATION NOT VACCINATION. The crowd waved streamers as a brass band welcomed the procession to the town center. William Young, a pharmaceutical chemist and leader of one of Britain's many anti-vaccination

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societies, proposed a resolution: “That the principle of the Compulsory Vaccination Acts is subversive of that personal liberty which is the birthright of every free-born Briton; they are destructive of parental rights, tyrannical and unjust in operation, and ought, therefore, to be resisted by every constitutional means.” After singing “Rule, Britannia!” and burning copies of the Vaccination Acts, the crowd peacefully dispersed.

The demands made by Britain’s earliest anti-vaccination movement led to important changes that made vaccines safer for everyone and forced the government to address valid complaints about unequal access to quality medical care. But the rhetoric of freedom and individualism that was central to this campaign also had significant effects. The pitting of personal rights against government compulsion continues to be a crucial tool in anti-vaccinationism’s arsenal more than a century later, depressing rates of vaccination and compromising public health.

Smallpox epidemics were a global phenomenon throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The virus was highly contagious, and fatal in about 30 percent of cases. In its worst epidemic years, smallpox caused approximately a thousand deaths per million people in Britain. Survivors were often left blind, disabled, or scarred for life. The general superintendent of vaccination for the British colony of Madras warned that a victim of this frightening disease “becomes a mass of living corruption, so hideous that the mother sickens at the sight of her child and turns away.” Even if the child recovers, “it is so frightfully disfigured as scarcely to be recognized.” While smallpox trailed behind measles, scarlet fever, pertussis (whooping cough), and cholera among leading causes of death in the nineteenth century, it was the only epidemic disease that could be prevented through a medical technology.

Creating immunity by exposing the body to a mild case of disease has been practiced

for centuries. Variolation—inserting smallpox under the skin or inhaling smallpox scabs through the nose to prevent a more virulent infection later—was customary across China, South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the eighteenth century. It was introduced to Britain in the 1720s by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. What was new about vaccination was not the practice of inoculating against disease; rather, it was the substance used. An English country doctor named Edward Jenner observed that dairymaids and farmhands who had been exposed to cowpox

*Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.*

—George Bernard Shaw, 1903

never acquired smallpox and were resistant to variolation. His experiments with substituting cowpox for smallpox when inoculating his patients in the 1790s led him to develop the first vaccine (the word derives from the Latin for *cow*). Cowpox provided superior protection against smallpox, produced only a mild reaction, and could not be transmitted from person to person.

It was not yet understood that vaccination stimulates the immune system, training it to defend the body against future attacks of an invading organism. Nor was there a theory of herd immunity—that a well-vaccinated population left few hosts for a virus to infect, preventing its spread and protecting even the unvaccinated. But by the early 1800s, practical experience had demonstrated that high rates of vaccination in a community could curtail outbreaks of smallpox. So the British government began to offer it for free in 1840. Because the intention was to target poorer people—their bodies, homes, and neighborhoods were widely believed to be dirty, giving rise to disease—free vaccination was furnished through the new Poor Law of 1834, which provided medical services to the destitute. At

the same time, the government outlawed variolation, fearing that the older practice risked spreading smallpox rather than containing it.

In 1853—disappointed that, as the epidemiologist Edward Seaton reported, the “lower and uneducated classes” had shown only “indolence and indifference” toward the free vaccination services—the British government introduced a vaccine mandate. Legislation passed in 1853 and strengthened in 1867 and 1871 required all infants to be vaccinated against smallpox by either a private medical practitioner or one of the state’s corps of free public vaccinators. Because the Poor Law had

*Those who believe in freedom of the will have never loved and never hated.*

—Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, 1893

been providing free vaccination since 1840, it was more expedient for the government to continue this arrangement than to devise an entirely new bureaucracy. Public vaccination was offered at government workhouses and their infirmaries, sites that remained heavily stigmatized because of their association with pauperism. Setting up additional vaccination stations in schools, pubs, churches, and meeting halls did not rectify the problem; those compelled to use the public stations, wherever they were situated, often resented that, in the words of the editor of *The Eclectic Journal and Medical Free Press*, their children were “operated on indiscriminately with paupers,” who were entirely dependent on the government for their maintenance and thus the antithesis of the respectable British subject.

The vaccine mandate was rigorously enforced. Failure to comply resulted in a fine of up to one pound, more than many workingmen’s weekly wage. Those who could not pay the fine or refused to do so faced the seizure and auctioning of their household goods, a widespread practice that dated back to medieval forfeiture laws. If a child remained unvaccinated, a parent—generally the father—faced

a prison term of up to two weeks. These penalties could be imposed repeatedly until the child was vaccinated or had reached the age of fourteen. This was the first time that the British government had mandated a medical procedure, and the *East London Observer* asserted that in doing so it had effectively deprived parents of their “civil rights and privileges as citizens of an otherwise free country.” An anti-vaccination movement formed in opposition to what many cast as a dangerous practice and a despotic policy.

Fears of the technology were not baseless, and vaccination was inherently more dangerous for poor and working-class children whose parents were obliged to use the state’s free services. In the nineteenth century public vaccination was invasive, unclean, and posed the risk of exposure to blood-borne diseases. Unlike immunization today, which relies on sterile, single-use hypodermic needles, public vaccinators used a small surgical knife or a spring-loaded scarification device to cut lines into the flesh in a scored pattern. Before germ theory significantly altered medical and surgical practices in the 1880s, these instruments were rarely sterile and not typically cleaned between procedures.

After making four or five incisions on an infant’s arm, public vaccinators took lymph directly from the pustules of a so-called stock baby, who had been vaccinated a week earlier, and smeared it into the cuts. (Becoming a stock baby was also compulsory: having received a free vaccination, selected infants were required to become incubators and suppliers of vaccine matter for future procedures.) When infants returned to households that lacked running water and proper toilet facilities, incisions could easily become infected. By contrast, middle- and upper-class parents generally paid to have the procedure performed by private practitioners. They could direct the vaccinator to make a single incision and to use vaccine lymph straight from a calf, which many felt was safer because it had not passed through other bodies. Wealthy parents might



even circumvent the procedure altogether if their physician was willing to use a substitute as a placebo for cowpox, such as tartar emetic, a practice rumored to be widespread.

At a time when infant mortality was high—approximately 150 infants out of 1,000 live births died before their first birthday in the 1890s—parents feared exposing newborns to additional hazards. To avoid the risks that many feared vaccination posed, some parents sucked the vaccine out of their children's arms. Others moved to a new district in the middle of the night, gave false addresses when they registered their children's births, avoided birth registration altogether (after 1874 itself a crime), or practiced other means of evading vaccination officials. Dodging the authorities was difficult. One public vaccinator claimed to track defaulters "like a bloodhound on the murderer's trail."

While working-class parents often engaged in these forms of subterfuge independently, an organized anti-vaccination movement had also emerged by the 1860s. Over the next three

decades, almost two hundred anti-vaccination leagues formed. Many were branches of larger organizations. William Young's London Society for the Abolition of Compulsory Vaccination grew out of a mutual-protection society that he had established to help pay the fines of its working-class members. Young even wrote to the secretary of state on parents' behalf, denouncing the "long and malicious prosecution" of "anti-vaccination martyrs" like Charles Hayward, a laborer who had been fined more than fifty pounds for noncompliance. The National Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League, run by Mary and William Hume-Rothery, attracted a different population: financially comfortable—and socially and politically powerful—middle-class liberals. While they rarely felt the full effects of the Vaccination Acts personally, these campaigners were committed to the principle of minimal government interference in private life. They sought to overturn the Vaccination Acts by lobbying Parliament and by seeking to elect anti-vaccination representatives. Before

Advertisement for Berlei lingerie, United Kingdom, c. 1968.

# SISTERS, FIGHT FOR FREEDOM!



1898, however, this strategy had only modest success and alienated working-class resisters who suffered the indignities and dangers of public vaccination firsthand, were much more likely to be prosecuted for noncompliance, and were even denied the right to vote until 1884.

In an age obsessed with Gothic horror, anti-vaccinators drew on the rhetoric and imagery of vampires and mad scientists to express their fears of bodily violation and physical pollution. Vaccination, they claimed, contaminated the body with animal products, transmitted syphilis and other blood-borne diseases, and rotted the flesh of “pure” British babies. Campaigners decried the use of stock babies, especially those whose family history of physical, mental, or moral health was suspect. This arm-to-arm method, the homeopath J.J. Garth

*Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficent.*

—Louis Brandeis, 1928

Wilkinson claimed, “mingles in a communism of blood the taints of the community,” suggesting that not only diseases but character traits could be passed through the blood. This critique positioned babies as dangerous disease spreaders. But anti-vaccinators also maintained that children were the victims of science run amok. They warned parents about protecting their vulnerable infants from what Mary Hume-Rothery termed the “cutters and carvers” who, they claimed, were using babies as experimental material.

Advocates of vaccination condemned the campaign as lurid and sensationalist, yet even newspapers that did not support the anti-vaccination cause extensively covered the issue—the rhetoric made for good copy. But anti-vaccinators were not reliant on the mainstream press to reach either the public or the politicians they hoped to influence. They published their own journals, such as the *Vaccination Inquirer*, as a means to dissemi-

nate their views and communicate with one another. In an age when printing was cheap, they produced pamphlets and posters, some illustrated with horrific, attention-grabbing images. Anti-vaccination activist W.J. Furnival's 1906 self-published album of “vaccination disasters” featured photographs of babies in coffins and an infant's arm rotting out of its socket. In addition to making good use of the social media of their day, the leaders and paid spokespersons of the anti-vaccination leagues drummed up supporters and funding by speaking at events around the nation and at meetings overseas organized by their counterparts in Europe and North America.

The nineteenth-century anti-vaccination movement was as much political as medical; campaigners from across the class spectrum framed their resistance in terms of nationalism, individualism, bodily autonomy, and parental choice. Even if vaccination was the greatest of blessings, William Hume-Rothery posited, “the state would have no more right to [enforce it] than it would have to enact that every man should bathe himself regularly every morning.” The *Vaccination Inquirer* attacked compulsory vaccination as un-English and claimed to be fighting the “babies' battle,” championing the civil liberties of individuals whose vulnerable bodies and personal rights, it argued, should not be violated by big government. Working-class anti-vaccinators in particular questioned whether they were not in fact “owners of their own persons” but instead merely slaves or livestock who were being marked by the government as if they were its property. “They might as well brand us,” argued one agitator in 1856.

Such language of individual freedoms and government overreach emerged almost immediately. In 1854, the year after the mandate took effect, the water-cure practitioner John Gibbs published *Our Medical Liberties*, a pamphlet denouncing compulsory vaccination as the “first direct aggression upon the person of the subject in medical matters” that had ever been attempted



in Britain. The idea that mandating a medical intervention undermined individualism and represented unwarranted state interference in private life reflected the classical liberal ideology that dominated British political and economic thought in the mid-nineteenth century. Liberalism was central to the anti-vaccination movement. The London Society for the Abolition of Compulsory Vaccination argued that there should be “free trade in vaccination”: let those who want it get it, and “let those be free who don’t want it.” The government, anti-vaccinators claimed, should have no role in these decisions because it was a matter of personal choice. Any self-proclaimed liberal who does not recognize the right to refuse vaccination “is not a Liberal, he is a liar,” charged Alfred Milnes, a member of the National Liberal Club and editor of the *Vaccination Inquirer*.

Multiple administrations, both Liberal and Conservative, sidestepped the larger question of compulsion and countered resistance by insisting that vaccination had been proven to work even if the mechanism through which it provided immunity was poorly understood. Government officials routinely dodged anti-vaccinators’ political critique and merely denounced them as dangerous faddists, anti-scientific fanatics, and negligent or even cruel parents. Much of the medical profession agreed with a *Lancet* correspondent who dismissed the arguments of anti-vaccinators as “puerile and contemptible.” These attempts to belittle anti-vaccinators rather than engage with their concerns backfired. The movement kept growing, and its message became more coherent. In working-class neighborhoods of London’s East End, the vaccination rate was only 43 percent in 1896 because of pronounced opposition. That year a range of societies devoted to the cause formed the National Anti-Vaccination League, combining their funds and efforts to uphold what one correspondent to the *Vaccination Inquirer* called the “working man’s right to call his body his own.”

The organized movement had been strategically supporting political candidates since the 1870s, and it finally paid off. The results of

an 1898 election in the city of Reading, held to replace a Conservative member of Parliament who had died in office, eventually stimulated the government to act. The Liberal candidate, a political newcomer who had pledged his support for the anti-vaccination cause in exchange for the movement’s backing, won by the largest majority in the district’s history. This unexpected outcome—coupled with the fact that suffrage had expanded to include most working-class men after 1884—triggered the Conservative administration to address the persistent complaints of anti-vaccinators. In 1898 Parliament capitulated on the issues that had proved most contentious, passing legislation that replaced public vaccination stations with home visits and the arm-to-arm method with sterilized calf lymph. The government

*People will never fight for your freedom if you have not given evidence that you are prepared to fight for it yourself.*

—Bayard Rustin, 1986

also capped the number of penalties that could be imposed on objecting parents.

The most important concession was the introduction of exemptions to the mandate, made possible in 1898 through a “conscience clause.” Throughout the campaign anti-vaccinators had drawn on legal precedents in their struggle for the “liberty of conscience.” The 1689 Toleration Act had enabled Protestant dissenters to “affirm” rather than to “swear” an oath on the Church of England’s Bible in legal proceedings. In 1888 this right was extended to atheists and members of other religions. The 1757 Militia Act had similarly exempted Quakers from supplying property for military use because of their religious pacifism. The Elementary Education Act of 1870 allowed children whose families were not Anglican to abstain from prayers and religious teaching within the new state school system. Using these precedents, anti-vaccinators successfully argued that citizens should also be able to conscientiously object to

other state policies. This allowance would have enormous implications when conscription was introduced in the middle of World War I, with conscientious objection to vaccination providing the blueprint for conscientious objection to military service.

Beginning in 1898 parents seeking an exemption were obliged to appear before a magistrate, pay a court fee, and provide satisfactory evidence that they did “conscientiously believe that vaccination would be prejudicial to the health of the child” in question. The government required this process to be completed within four months of the child’s birth to prevent parents from circumventing the penalties for noncompliance by later claiming

*Men believe themselves to be free simply because they are conscious of their actions and unconscious of the causes whereby those actions are determined.*

—Benedict de Spinoza, 1677

conscientious objection. Significantly, the conscience clause did not allow parents to object merely to the principle of compulsion and thus to refuse to vaccinate their children as a form of resistance to the mandate. The objection had to be a deeply held belief that vaccination posed health risks, even if this belief was not “reasonably founded.”

Because applicants for exemptions had to satisfy a magistrate of their sincerity, the process of granting certificates was uneven. Magistrates were permitted, even required, to cross-examine applicants to determine whether their beliefs were “conscientious.” Since there was no statutory definition of what made an objection to vaccination conscientious—one justice complained that there were no X-ray devices to make the conscience visible—magistrates had considerable leeway. Some refused to hear any cases at all, believing that they could never be satisfied; at least one magistrate proclaimed to have a conscientious objection to giving out certificates of conscientious objection. But

others granted certificates to all who applied, without even the pretense of evaluating the nature of the objection.

Magistrates were invariably elite white men, while applicants were generally working-class. Many objectors were women, and in some of Britain’s port cities they may have been non-white or mixed-race. Judges often raised doubts about whether those seeking exemptions were educated enough to have a conscience in the first place. A father who was denied a certificate openly challenged the magistrate hearing his case: “That means that you say my conscience is nothing?” “Well,” replied the magistrate, “not in vaccination.”

Applicants often left empty-handed after paying travel expenses and losing a day’s wages for the privilege. They felt bullied, ridiculed, and humiliated. In some districts women were routinely turned away and told to send their husbands in their place. Although the 1898 law used the word *parent*, the government’s legal advisers maintained that because British law designated the father the legal guardian of his child, only he could apply for a certificate of conscientious objection.

Anti-vaccinators charged that in practice the 1898 legislation undermined the basic civil right to equal treatment under the law: according to the Liberal politician Arnold Lupton, it “gives exemption to the rich”—who could afford the time and money necessary to procure an exemption and were rarely rejected—“and denies it to the poor.” The movement attempted to use the letter of the law to its advantage by producing pamphlets that schooled exemption seekers on how to state their case, encouraging them to use the language of conscientious objection. This strategy could backfire—at least one magistrate turned away anyone he perceived as having been coached, reasoning that the objection could not be sincere if it parroted the words of another. Anti-vaccinators able to shoulder the costs might travel hundreds of miles in search of sympathetic magistrates. One popular destination was Oldham, an industrial town outside Manchester where anti-vaccinationism found a





*Young Woman Jumping from the Kiyomizu Temple Balcony with an Umbrella as a Parachute, by Suzuki Harunobu, 1765.*

natural home among working-class mutual-aid movements such as trade unionism, cooperative stores, friendly societies, and the campaign for universal male suffrage—precisely because it, too, underscored social, political, and economic disparities. Magistrates there held mass hearings, approving hundreds of applicants at a time. While Oldham's own anti-vaccination society took a harder line, arguing that it was a "retrograde and humiliating step to seek by purchase of certificate exemption from an oppression we have already cast off," the town's

magistrates issued approximately forty thousand certificates by the end of 1898. In other anti-vaccination strongholds almost half of all births were regularly being issued certificates of exemption by 1905.

According to a legal manual, the 1898 law had been intended as a "truce and an armistice." But both anti-vaccinators and the government were displeased with the implementation of exemptions, which spurred politicians to introduce new legislation in 1907. It stipulated that parents—now explicitly including

mothers, after much debate—would be granted certificates of exemption upon making a statutory declaration, without being questioned or refused. In the immediate aftermath of the legislation, approximately 20 percent of infants received exemptions. Although committed anti-vaccinators continued to protest the Vaccination Acts on principle, after 1907 the anti-vaccination movement precipitously declined. The new conscience clause effectively defanged the vaccine mandate by providing a durable compromise: it made opting in to what was still considered a significant public health measure the default while upholding the individual's right to medical liberty. The

*You could not liberate a stone if there were no law of gravity—for where will the stone go once it is quarried?*

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1942

Vaccination Acts were formally repealed by the National Health Service Acts of 1946 and 1947, which introduced what was intended to be a non-stigmatizing system of medical care for all. By this time the smallpox vaccination rate had dropped to approximately 42 percent, with about 34 percent of infants granted conscientious objections. An additional 4 percent died before they could be vaccinated or proved insusceptible to the procedure. But the remaining 20 percent were unaccounted for, having fallen between the cracks of a largely defunct system of compulsory vaccination.

The National Anti-Vaccination League remained in operation through the mid-1970s, with a membership of around a thousand. In this later period it attracted not only vegetarians, practitioners of yoga, and anti-fluoridationists but also those with extreme right-wing views. After receiving a large donation from a Mrs. Howey, it was subsumed within a foundation concerned with environmental issues such as air pollution, which in turn folded in 1982. Although no other vac-

cines were ever mandated for the entire population, anti-vaccinationism reemerged in Britain in the 1990s in response to fraudulent claims that the combined vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella was linked to autism and as part of a wider parenting trend favoring organic food and naturopathy. But this period was characterized more by vaccine hesitancy than by outright resistance to either the medical intervention itself or the government's role in providing it. Ironically, this hesitancy was a product of the success of vaccine technology. Vaccination was a key factor in the eradication of smallpox, and this first immunization paved the way for others that eventually prevented a range of deadly diseases. This has meant that fears of rare vaccine side effects loom larger in some parents' imagination than their fears of the real dangers posed by epidemic diseases themselves.

In the age of Covid-19, concerns about the safety of vaccines and the ethics of government mandates have once again raised questions about the politics of vaccination and what we mean by medical liberty. The nineteenth-century anti-vaccination movement articulated widespread anxieties about both bodily integrity and the appropriate role of government in society. It led to changes that made vaccination safer and more convenient. These developments bolstered trust in vaccination, which has proved to be one of the most important medical innovations of all time. The infant mortality rate in Britain today is 3.4 deaths per 1,000 live births. This is largely because epidemic diseases such as measles, diphtheria, pertussis, and rubella—all of which killed many children in the nineteenth century—are now preventable. The long history of vaccination and its opposition has taught us that the benefits of vaccines, which have become extremely safe, far outweigh the risks. But it also suggests that attending to the concerns of the targets and beneficiaries of public health initiatives is vital to the success of any policy to contain communicable diseases—which will always be with us, precisely because germs do not recognize the individual's right to bodily autonomy.



# CONVERSATIONS

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HEROD AGRIPPA II



JUAN JOSÉ ARÉVALO

## A speech, 66

Consider these pretexts one at a time and see how feeble are your grounds for war. First, the charges against the procurators. You should flatter, not provoke, the authorities. When for trifling errors you pile on reproaches, it is yourselves you hurt by your denunciation of the offenders. Instead of injuring you secretly and shamefacedly, they plunder you openly. Nothing damps an aggressor like patient submission, and the meekness of the persecuted puts the persecutor to shame. I grant that the ministers of Rome are unbearably harsh. Does it follow that all the Romans are persecuting you, including Caesar? Yet it is on them that you are going to make war! Our grievances can be quickly put right: the same procurator will not be here forever, and his successors are almost sure to be more reasonable.

Your new passion for liberty comes too late. You ought to have made a supreme effort to retain it long ago. The experience of slavery is a painful one, and to escape it altogether any effort is justified; but the man who has once submitted and then revolts is a refractory slave, not a lover of liberty. Thus the time when we ought to have done everything possible to keep the Romans out was when the country was invaded by Pompey. But our ancestors and their kings, with material, physical, and mental resources far superior to yours, faced a mere fraction of the Roman army and put up no resistance. Will you, who have learned submission from your fathers and are so ill provided compared with those who first submitted, stand up to the whole Roman Empire?

## A speech, 1951

When I ascended to the presidency of the nation, I was possessed by a romantic fire. I was still a believer in the essential nobleness of man, as fervent a believer as the most devout in the sincerity of political doctrines and inspired by the cordial aspiration of helping the people form their own happiness. I believed that six years of government of a Latin American nation were sufficient to satisfy the crushed popular aspirations and to create structures of social service denied the people by feudal governments. I still believed, and with reason, that the Republic of Guatemala could rule itself, without submission to external forces, free from mandates that did not emanate from the popular will of the majority. To achieve this in Guatemala we had to combat the peculiar economic and social system of the country: of a country in which culture, politics, and the economy were in the hands of three hundred families, heirs of the privileges of colonial times or rented to the foreign factors. The banana magnates, co-nationals of Roosevelt, rebelled against the audacity of a Central American president who gave to his fellow citizens a juridical equality with the honorable families of exporters. It was then that I, an ingenuous and romantic schoolteacher, from the presidency of my country discovered how perishable, frail, and slippery the brilliant international doctrines of democracy and freedom were. It was then, with the deepest despondency and pain, that I discovered what measure separates the word from life.



BENEDICT DE SPINOZA



SIMONE WEIL

*Theological-Political Treatise, 1670*

It can't happen that a mind should be absolutely subject to the control of someone else. Indeed, no one can transfer to another person his natural right or faculty of reasoning freely and of judging concerning anything whatever. Nor can anyone be compelled to do this. That's why rule over minds is considered violent and why the supreme majesty seems to wrong its subjects and to usurp their rights whenever it tries to prescribe to everyone what they must embrace as true and reject as false and, further, by what opinions everyone's mind ought to be moved in its devotion to God. These things are subject to each individual's control. No one can surrender that even if he wants to. I confess that someone can get prior control of another person's judgment in many ways, some of them almost incredible. So though that person does not directly command the other person's judgment, it can still depend so much on what he says that we can rightly say that to that extent it is subject to his control. But whatever ingenuity has been able to achieve in this matter, it has never reached the point where men do not learn from experience that each person is plentifully supplied with his own faculty of judgment and that men's minds differ as much as their palates do. Though Moses had gotten the greatest prior control of the judgment of his people—not by deception, but by a divine virtue, with the result that he was believed to be divine and to speak and do everything by divine inspiration—still he was not able to escape murmuring and perverse interpretations. Much less are other monarchs able to do this.

*Oppression and Liberty, 1934*

One can understand by liberty something other than the possibility of obtaining without effort what is pleasurable. There exists a very different conception of liberty, a heroic conception, which is that of common wisdom. True liberty is not defined by a relationship between desire and its satisfaction but by a relationship between thought and action. The absolutely free man would be he whose every action proceeded from a preliminary judgment concerning the end that he set himself and the sequence of means suitable for attaining this end. It matters little whether the actions in themselves are easy or painful, or even whether they are crowned with success; pain and failure can make a man unhappy but cannot humiliate him as long as it is he himself who disposes of his own capacity for action. Ordering one's own actions does not signify in any way acting arbitrarily; arbitrary actions do not proceed from any exercise of judgment and cannot, properly speaking, be called free. Every judgment bears upon an objective set of circumstances and consequently upon a warp and woof of necessities. Living man can on no account cease to be hemmed in on all sides by an absolutely inflexible necessity; but since he is a thinking creature, he can choose between either blindly submitting to the spur with which necessity pricks him on from outside or else adapting himself to the inner representation of it that he forms in his own mind. It is in this that the contrast between servitude and liberty lies.





KNIGHTS OF LABOR ..... FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



### Preamble of Constitution, 1885

To secure to the workers the full enjoyment of the wealth they create; sufficient leisure in which to develop their intellectual, moral, and social faculties; all of the benefits, recreation, and pleasures of association; in a word, to enable them to share in the gains and honors of advancing civilization, we demand at the hands of the state:

The establishment of Bureaus of Labor Statistics that we may arrive at a correct knowledge of the educational, moral, and financial condition of the laboring masses;

The adoption of measures providing for the health and safety of those engaged in mining, manufacturing, and building industries, and for indemnification to those engaged therein for injuries received through lack of necessary safeguards;

The enactment of laws to compel corporations to pay their employees weekly, in lawful money, for the labor of the preceding week.

And we demand at the hands of Congress:

The establishment of a national monetary system, in which a circulating medium in necessary quantity shall issue directly to the people, without the intervention of banks;

That the importation of foreign labor under contract be prohibited;

That, in connection with the post office, the government shall organize financial exchanges, safe deposits, and facilities for deposit of the savings of the people in small sums.

We will endeavor to associate our own labors:

To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work;

To shorten the hours of labor by a general refusal to work for more than eight hours.

### State of the Union Address, 1941

There is nothing mysterious about the foundations of a healthy and strong democracy. The basic things expected by our people of their political and economic systems are simple. They are:

Equality of opportunity for youth and for others;

Jobs for those who can work;

Security for those who need it;

The ending of special privilege for the few;

The preservation of civil liberties for all;

The enjoyment of the fruits of scientific progress in a wider and constantly rising standard of living.

These are the simple, basic things that must never be lost sight of in the turmoil and unbelievable complexity of our modern world. The inner and abiding strength of our economic and political systems is dependent upon the degree to which they fulfill these expectations.

Many subjects connected with our social economy call for immediate improvement. As examples:

We should bring more citizens under the coverage of old-age pensions and unemployment insurance.

We should widen the opportunities for adequate medical care.

We should plan a better system by which persons deserving or needing gainful employment may obtain it.

# MISCELLANY

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“The image you get from reading the *Roe v. Wade* opinion is it’s mostly a doctor’s-rights case—a doctor’s right to prescribe what he thinks his patient needs,” Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said in a 2018 interview with legal scholar Jeffrey Rosen. “My idea of how choice should have developed was not a privacy notion, not a doctor’s-right notion, but a woman’s right to control her own destiny, to be able to make choices without a Big Brother state telling her what she can and cannot do.”

A public announcement from 156 BC offers a reward of three talents of copper for the recapture of an eighteen-year-old Syrian-born slave named Hermon who has escaped from an Alexandria household; two talents to anyone who “points him out in a temple”; five if he is found “in the house of a substantial and actionable man.” The advertisement notes that Hermon “has taken with him three octadrachms of coined gold, ten pearls, an iron ring...and is wearing a cloak and a loincloth”; that he has “a mole by the left side of the nose”; and that he is “tattooed on the right wrist with two barbaric letters.”

In 2011 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals filed a lawsuit against SeaWorld alleging that five orcas were being held as slaves in violation of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution; it is believed to be the first legal filing arguing that the amendment applies to nonhumans. The orcas, named as plaintiffs in the case, had been caught in the wild and were being used in performances in Florida and California. “Slavery is slavery, and it does not depend on the species of the slave any more than it depends on gender, race, or religion,” PETA’s counsel said. The following year, the judge ruled that the amendment does not protect nonhumans.

In *The Master and Margarita*, Mikhail Bulgakov fictionalized the well-known New Testament scene in which the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate offers the Jewish people the choice to save either the rebel Barabbas or Jesus Christ from execution. Bulgakov’s Yeshua declares that “all power is violence over people” and that “a time will come when there will be no power of the Caesars.” Pilate is deeply moved by the prisoner’s “mad utopian talk” and finds “no grounds for indictment”; when the crowd chooses to free Barabbas, Pilate feels “incomprehensible anguish” and an escalating migraine at being forced to sentence Yeshua to death.

After thousands of dockworkers went on strike in the Los Angeles area in 1923 and the Industrial Workers of the World called on workers in other industries to strike in solidarity, the police announced a ban on public meetings. Upton Sinclair organized a rally in response, saying, “We’re testing the right of the police to suppress free speech and assemblage.” As soon as he took the platform, a police captain threatened, “I’m taking you in if you utter a word.” Sinclair began reciting the First Amendment and, according to a longshoreman who was present, the captain promptly “grabbed the people’s novelist by the collar” and arrested him.

One of the earliest known instances of wild carnivores being held in captivity in Mesoamerica dates to around the second century in Teotihuacán; excavations starting in the late 1990s uncovered the remains of almost two hundred animals—including wolves, eagles, and jaguars—in the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon. The skeletons showed bone breaks, bone fusion, and abnormal growths, as well as indications of a human-controlled diet.



The Chinese Communist Party requires that all published books be assigned a “book number” by the government; between 2003 and 2004 the General Administration of Press and Publication banned around fifty periodicals and dictionaries for using registration numbers illegally obtained from other books. In January 2004 the *People’s Daily* reported that two men had been sentenced to seven and nine years in prison by a court in Anhui Province for “unlawful operation of a business.” The men had published a book of love poetry using fraudulent book numbers.

Primo Levi’s 1971 short story “Heading West” describes a group of indigenous people who refuse to partake in an experiment requiring them to take a new drug purported to end a suicide epidemic; the chief writes that his people “prefer freedom to drugs and death to illusion.” A few years later, after Levi’s German teacher was found hanged, Levi refused to sign a petition claiming that he had actually been murdered, insisting that “suicide is a right we all have.” In a letter, Levi described suicide as “an act of will, a free decision.” His own death in 1987—from a fall down his apartment building’s stairwell—was ruled a suicide, though some contemporary scholars have contested this.

When an “aggressive, independent woman” rejected his sermons in the fifteenth century, Heinrich Kramer prosecuted her as a witch. After she was acquitted, he and James Sprenger wrote the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a treatise on witchcraft that courts throughout Europe used to identify and prosecute witches. A century later a German eyewitness observed that “throughout the towns and villages of all the diocese scurried special accusers, inquisitors, notaries, jurors, judges, constables, dragging to trial and torture human beings of both sexes and burning them in great numbers... The children of those convicted and punished were sent into exile; their goods were confiscated.”

A temperance movement “Anti-Saloon Battle Hymn” from 1907 describes the saloon as an “awful, unspeakable monster” that “makes millions of widows and orphans,/ and drunkards of millions of men” and asks that “from its shackles, O God, do thou free us,/ and for freedom we ever will stand.” In 1914 the song “Emancipation” pleaded for “not one slave” of alcohol to remain in this nation of “true liberty so grand.”

“Don’t take mother’s milk—it’s for young calves,” reads a medieval poem by the blind ascetic al-Maarri, “or thick white honey... the bees didn’t make it just to give it away!” In al-Maarri’s *Epistle of the Horse and the Mule*, the titular horse complains of “torture from the sons of Eve” and Bedouins’ cruelty toward the “tribes of *equus*”: “Our lot is to have hardships thrown around our necks and heaped onto our backs!”

When Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi was found guilty of corruption and fraud in 1975 by the Allahabad High Court, she instituted a state of emergency to control the opposition, suspending elections and arresting dissidents. She cabled world leaders to defend her decision, after which the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office declared that “an authoritarian regime is better equipped than a democracy” to “make India less of a burden on the world” and increased British aid to India by over 30 percent.

At the start of the French Revolution, the physician Jean-Paul Marat began publishing an antimonarchical journal in which he called the king’s minister of finance “the cruelest adversary of freedom.” In 1790 the Marquis de Lafayette dispatched thousands of soldiers to arrest Marat, even stationing them on rooftops in case Marat, an aviation enthusiast, attempted to escape by balloon. While the legality of the warrant was being disputed, Marat wrote and published a pamphlet mocking these extravagant efforts before making a quiet escape.



宣統二年春二月  
平安居士石冲鉤製





# MORE TROUBLE THAN IT'S WORTH

by Lewis H. Lapham

It does no good to ask the weakling's point-less question, "Is America a fascist state?" We must ask instead, in a major rather than a minor key, "Can we make America the best damned fascist state the world has ever seen," an authoritarian paradise deserving the admiration of the international capital markets, worthy of "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind"? I wish to be the first to say we can. We're Americans; we have the money and the know-how to succeed where Hitler failed, and history has favored us with advantages not given to the early pioneers.

*We don't have to burn any books.*

The Nazis in the 1930s were forced to waste precious time and money on the inoculation of the German citizenry, too well-educated for its own good, against the infections of impermissible thought. We can count it as a blessing that we don't bear the burden of an educated citizenry. The systematic destruction of the public school and library systems over the past thirty years, a program wisely carried out under administrations both Republican and Democratic, protects the market for the sale and distribution of the government's propaganda posters.

The publishing companies can print as many books as will guarantee their profit (books on any and all subjects, some of them even truthful), but to people who don't know how to read or think, they do as little harm as snowflakes falling on a frozen pond.

*We don't have to disturb, terrorize, or plunder the bourgeoisie.*

In Communist Russia as well as in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the codes of social hygiene occasionally put the regime to the trouble of smashing department-store windows, beating bank managers to death, inviting opinionated merchants on complimentary tours (all expenses paid, breathtaking scenery) of Siberia. The resorts to violence served as study guides for free-thinking businessmen reluctant to give up on the democratic notion that the individual citizen is entitled to an owner's interest in his or her own mind.

The difficulty doesn't arise among people accustomed to regarding themselves as functions of a corporation. Thanks to the diligence of our news media and the structure of our tax laws, our affluent and suburban classes have taken to heart the lesson taught to the aspiring serial killers rising through the ranks at West Point

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*From "On Message," first published as a Notebook column in the October 2005 issue of Harper's Magazine.*

and the Harvard Business School—think what you're told to think, and not only do you get to keep the house in Florida or command of the Pentagon press office but on some sunny prize day not far over the horizon, the compensation committee will hand you a check for \$40 million. Who doesn't now know that the corporation is immortal, that it is the corporation that grants the privilege of an identity, confers meaning on one's life, gives the pension, a decent credit rating, and the priority standing in the community? Of course the corporation reserves the right to open one's email, test one's blood, listen to the phone calls, examine one's urine, hold the patent on the copyright to any idea generated on its premises. Why ever should it not? As surely as the loyal fascist knew that it was his duty to serve the state, the true American knows that it is his duty to protect the brand.

Having met many fine people who come up to the corporate mark—on golf courses and commuter trains, tending to their gardens in Fairfield County while cutting back the payrolls in Michigan and Mexico—I'm proud to say that we're blessed with a bourgeoisie that will welcome fascism as gladly as it welcomes the rain in April and the sun in June. No need to send for the Gestapo or the NKVD; it will not be necessary to set examples.

*We don't have to gag the press or seize the radio stations.*

People trained to the corporate style of thought and movement have no further use for free speech, which is corrupting, overly emotional, reckless, and ill-informed, not calibrated to the time available for television talk or to the performance standards of a Super Bowl halftime show. It is to our advantage that free speech doesn't meet the criteria of the free market. We don't require the inspirational genius of a Joseph Goebbels; we can rely instead on the dictates of the Nielsen ratings and the camera angles, secure in the knowledge that the major media syndicates run the business on strictly corporatist principles—afraid of anything disruptive or inappropriate, committed to the promulgation

of what is responsible, rational, and approved by experts. Their willingness to stay on message is a credit to their professionalism.

The early twentieth-century fascists had to contend with individuals who regarded their freedom of expression as a necessity—the bone and marrow of their existence, how they recognized themselves as human beings. Which was why, if sometimes they refused appointments to the state-run radio stations, they sometimes were found dead on the Italian autostrada or drowned in the Kiel Canal. The authorities looked upon their deaths as forms of self-indulgence. The same attitude governs the agreement reached between labor and management at our leading news organizations. No question that the freedom of speech is extended to every American—it says so in the Constitution—but the privilege is one that mustn't be abused. Understood in a proper and financially rewarding light, freedom of speech is more trouble than it's worth—a luxury comparable to owning a racehorse and likely to bring with it little else except the risk of being made to look ridiculous. People who learn to conduct themselves in a manner respectful of the telephone tap and the surveillance camera have no reason to fear the fist of censorship. By removing the chore of having to think for oneself, one frees up more leisure time to enjoy the convenience of the internet services that know exactly what one likes to hear and see and wear and eat.

*We don't have to murder the intelligentsia.*

Here again, we find ourselves in luck. The society is so glutted with easy entertainment that no writer or company of writers is troublesome enough to warrant the compliment of an arrest, or even the courtesy of a sharp blow to the head. What passes for the American school of dissent talks exclusively to itself in the pages of obscure journals, across the coffee cups in Berkeley and Park Slope, in half-deserted lecture halls in small Midwestern colleges. The author on the platform or the beach towel can be relied upon to direct his angriest invective at the other members of the academy who failed to drape around the title of his latest book the garland of a rave review.





*The Start of the Race of the Riderless Horses*, by Horace Vernet, 1820.

The blessings bestowed by Providence place America in the front rank of nations addressing the problems of a twenty-first century, certain to require bold geopolitical initiatives and strong ideological solutions. How can it be otherwise? More pressing demands for always scarcer resources; ever larger numbers of people who cannot be controlled except with an increasingly heavy hand of authoritarian guidance. Who better than the Americans to lead the fascist renaissance, set the paradigm, order the preemptive strikes? The existence of mankind hangs in the balance; failure is not an option.

I don't say that over the past thirty years we haven't made brave strides forward. We can see how well we've begun the new project for the next millennium—the notion of absolute and eternal truth embraced by the evangelical Christians and embodied in the strict constructions of the Constitution; our national identity provided by anonymous Arabs; Darwin's theory of evolution rescinded by the fiat

of “intelligent design”; a state of perpetual war and a government administering, in generous and daily doses, the drug of fear; the nation's congressional districts gerrymandered to defend against the intrusion of a liberal-minded president for the next fifty years; the news media devoted to the arts of iconography, busily minting images of corporate executives like those of the emperor heroes on the coins of ancient Rome.

An impressive beginning, in line with what the world has come to expect from the innovative Americans, but we can do better. The early twentieth-century fascisms didn't enter their golden age until the proletariat in the countries that gave them birth had been reduced to abject poverty. The music and the marching songs rose with the cry of eagles from the wreckage of the domestic economy. I think we can look forward with confidence to character-building bankruptcies, picturesque bread riots, thrilling cavalcades of splendidly costumed motorcycle police.

# GLOSSARY

**attame:** To attack, lay hands on, meddle with. From Latin *attāmināre*, to lay hands on, attack, violate.

**biopower:** The power of a political entity to regulate the lives of the populace. After French *bio-pouvoir*. “Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of biopower.”—Michel Foucault, 1976

**BolaWrap:** A handheld remote restraint device that fires an eight-foot Kevlar tether to entangle an individual’s torso or legs. From *bola*, a weapon consisting of a number of balls connected by a cord; when thrown, it entangles the limbs of a quarry.

**bondage:** Arbitrary or tyrannical impost.

**captive mirror:** A fitting in a handbag that secures a mirror by means of chains.

**carcerist:** One who advocates or has to do with prisons. “How comes our loyal carcerist to forget all these sorts of tides?”—Sydney Smith, 1821

**confine:** To enclose or retain within limits; to fasten, secure, keep in place. From Italian *confinare*, to border upon, bound, limit, set limits to, banish.

**copperstick:** A police officer’s truncheon.

**daiyo kangoku:** 代用監獄 (*Japanese*) Lit., “substitute prison.” Detention cells in police stations that are used as legal alternatives to prisons. Suspects can be detained for as many as seventy-two hours without permission from a judge.

**detain:** To hold, hold down; translation of *dētīnēre* from the Vulgate.

**domesticate:** To accustom an animal to live under the care and near the habitations of humans; to tame or bring under control. From participial stem of Latin *domesticāre*, to dwell in a house, to accustom. “There is hardly a tribe so barbarous as not to have domesticated at least the dog.”—Charles Darwin, 1861

**encumber:** To hamper, embarrass persons, their movements, actions, etc., with a clog or burden. Also of things: to act as a clog or restraint upon. From late Latin *incombrāre*, from *in*, in, upon, and *combrus*, barricade, obstacle, probably representing Latin *cumulus*, heap.

**habeas corpus:** (*Latin*) Lit., “thou shalt have the body.” A writ issuing from a court of justice requiring the body of a person restrained of liberty to be brought before a judge, so the lawfulness of the restraint may be determined.

**handcuff:** A lockable restraint consisting of a ring, typically made

of metal and one of a pair joined by a short chain or bar.

**hobble:** (*Slang*) To take into custody, nab. First use in this sense, 1819.

**hog-tie:** To secure an animal by tying all four feet together or a person by tying hands and feet together; figuratively, to hinder the free action of. Originally U.S. “I was caught in a burglary, overpowered, hog-tied, and waiting for the wagon.”—Jack Black, 1926

**immure:** To shut up or enclose within walls; to imprison; to confine as in a prison or fortress. From medieval Latin *immūrāre*, from *im-* and *mūrus*, wall (compare late Latin *mūrāre*, to wall).

**iron maiden:** An instrument of torture consisting of an upright box lined with iron spikes into which a victim is shut. In extended use, an object that confines a person or body part. From German *eiserne Jungfer* (1751 or earlier); now usually *eiserne Jungfrau*.

**manacle:** A bond, a restraint. “In every ban,/The mind-forg’d manacles I hear.”—William Blake, 1794

**obedience:** “Obsequiousness; submission to authority; compliance with command or prohibition.”—Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755

**oppression:** An uncomfortable or distressing sense of physical or mental constriction, affliction, depression, or heaviness. “You and I hate Jacobinism as we hate the gates of hell. Why? Because it is a system of oppression.”—Edmund Burke, 1796

**prison editor:** An editor of a newspaper who takes legal responsibility for what is published and who serves any resulting term of imprisonment.



## fetter

A chain or shackle for the feet of a human being or animal; hence gen. a bond, shackle; anything that confines, impedes, or restrains. Also, *fetter-lock*, an apparatus fixed to the foot of a horse to prevent its running away. Compare Latin *pēdica*, Greek *πέδη*, of identical meaning and root.



**restrict:** To prohibit or prevent. “Tho’ restricted from flesh meals by the rules of their order, they are allowed to eat wild duck and teal, as a species of fish.”—Tobias Smollett, 1763

**RoboCop:** A suspicious and hypervigilant romantic partner who is very controlling; one who searches a partner’s phone for evidence of infidelity.

**seizure:** The sudden confiscation or forcible taking of possession of land or goods. From Frankish Latin (eighth cent.) *sacire* in the phrase *ad propriam* (or *ad proprietatem*) *sacire*, to take into one’s possession, to appropriate. As the word *sacire* is replaced by *ponere* in another example of the formula, its source is commonly believed to be the Germanic *satjan*, to place.

**shackle:** A fetter for a prisoner’s ankle or wrist, usually one of a pair connected by a chain, which is fastened to a ringbolt in the cell’s floor or wall. In Old English, a ring or collar for a prisoner’s neck. From Low German *schakel*, link of a chain, hobble for a horse; Dutch *schakel*; High German dialect *schakel*, link of a chain. Hence *the shackles*, the bonds of matrimony.

**ShotSpotter:** A gunshot-detection system that uses acoustic devices to identify the location of discharged firearms. Chicago’s ShotSpotter is one of the largest in the nation, covering approximately

## sack man

A bogeyman figure who carries away naughty children in a gunnysack. In Spanish-speaking countries this character is known as *el hombre del saco*; in Portugal *o homem do saco*. In Haiti he is known as Tonton Macoute (“Uncle Gunnysack”), from whence François Duvalier’s secret police unit. Among the Sinhalese people he is known as Gonibilla.



117 square miles. “Results suggest that implementing ShotSpotter technology has no significant impact on firearm-related homicides or arrest outcomes.”—*Journal of Urban Health*, 2021

**snare:** A device for capturing small wild animals or birds, usually consisting of a string with a running noose in which a foot or head may be caught.

**stricture:** In various occasional uses: the action of binding tightly; tight closure; restriction. From Latin *strictūra*, from *strict-*, *stringere*, two etymologically distinct verbs of coincident form in Latin: one with the sense to bind, draw tight, strain; the other with the sense to touch lightly, to gather flowers, to draw a sword.

**trammel:** A type of net; figuratively, anything that hinders or impedes free action. Generally explained as from Latin *tri-*, three, and *macula*,

mesh. The history of other senses is unclear. Charles du Fresne, seigneur du Cange, quotes a medieval Latin statute of Piacenza in which a *tramauiolum* is applied to a stick a cubit and a half long and then fixed to the necks of dogs to prevent them from running into vineyards where they might do mischief.

**trap:** A contrivance for catching game or noxious animals; a gin, snare, pitfall.

**tyranny:** Absolute sovereignty.

**wild:** Of persons or their attributes: uncivilized, savage; also, not accepting, or resisting, the constituted government; rebellious. Not under, or not submitting to, control. Acting or moving freely without restraint; going at one’s own will; unconfined, unrestricted. Primarily of animals, and hence of persons and things. “Youth is wild, and age is tame.”—attributed to Wm. Shakespeare, *Passionate Pilgrim*, 1599

## justice and liberty



Based on Google Ngram Viewer. The frequency of the words *justice* and *liberty* between 1790 and 2019, from a database of more than 5 million books.

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QUARTERLY

*Nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man  
and a human society than freedom.*  
—Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1879







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